

Thursday December 12 1996

Table of international flight routes and destinations including Abu Dhabi, Athens, Amsterdam, etc.

The Guardian INTERNATIONAL NEWSPAPER OF THE YEAR

Printed in London, Manchester, Frankfurt and Roubaix

46,734

The women who sort out crime

Female Crackers G2 with Europe's weather

Books in G2

Looking Aids in the face Plus: the year's best short stories and a chance to write one

OnLine

Weather forecasting with the world's largest computer G2 page 12/13

To dissemble: 'To hide under a false appearance; to disguise; to conceal; to play the hypocrite.'

Willetts pays the price

New blow for Major as key player quits

David Hencke Westminster Correspondent

JOHN Major's disaster-prone government... Mr Willetts, who quit as Paymaster-General, is the third ministerial casualty of the affair...

Main points

- CONCLUSIONS of Committee on Standards and Privileges: Mr Willetts's original note of his conversation with Sir Geoffrey Johnson Smith was broadly accurate.

complaints about the conduct of members, it will be our normal practice to take evidence on oath.



Mr Willetts outside his London home last night after proffering his resignation to John Major

Deserving not a shred of sympathy

Commentary

Hugo Young

DAVID Willetts is a luckless victim, but one who deserves not a shred of sympathy. His crime was to do what other people do, engage in the subterranean tradecraft of political management...



Willie Rushton, satirist, radio wit and cartoonist, dies at 59

Allison Daniels

A CAREER that spanned an array of artistic disciplines turned Willie Rushton, who died yesterday at 59, into a giant of comedy and satire.

BBC Radio 4 gameshow, I'm Sorry I Haven't a Clue. Mr Rushton began his career as a satirical cartoonist and co-founded Private Eye in 1961 with friends Paul Foot, Richard Ingrams and Christopher Booker.

enduring images of their time. "Willie was immensely jolly, very robust and inventive. His death is a big blow."

or British life without him." In 1978 he joined the panel of I'm Sorry I Haven't a Clue and contributed to 27 series.

Clue said he was one of life's few original talents. "He had a sort of prickly exterior but once you knew him you would discover what a kind man he was."



Rushton: 'immensely jolly'

Inside Two highly educated young Palestinians were convicted at the Old Bailey of plotting the 1994 bomb attack on the Israeli embassy.

World News King Chao-hwa, who offers for Confucian values and Liverpool FC, was awarded to rule Hong Kong when Chinese rule returns after 155 years.

Finance Roger Levitt, ex-sales superstar, is being prosecuted for allegedly breaking a lengthy ban on his acting as a company director.

Sport Steve Craig, 50, applicants to become the new boss at Brighton, 11, parties return to division three.

Comment and Letters 8, Obituaries 10, G2, Crossword 15, Weather 16, Radio and TV 16.

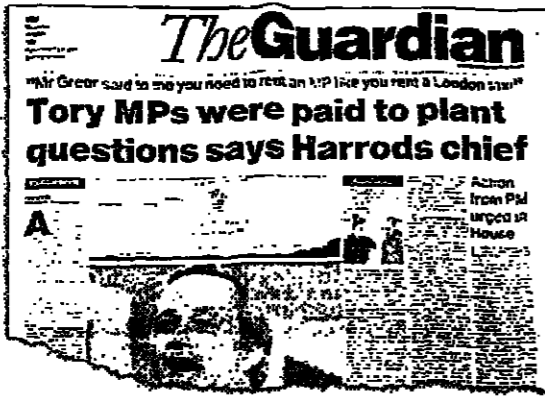
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The road to resignation



Oct 20, 1994 Guardian publishes allegations that Neil Hamilton, a junior trade minister, and Tim Smith, a junior NI minister took up to £2,000 each to ask Commons questions. Smith admits taking undeclared payments and resigns. Hamilton and lobbyist Ian Greer issue writs for libel. David Willetts, then a Tory whip, writes controversial memo.



Oct 25, 1994 Hamilton resigns and Lord Nolan's Committee on Standards in Public Life set up.



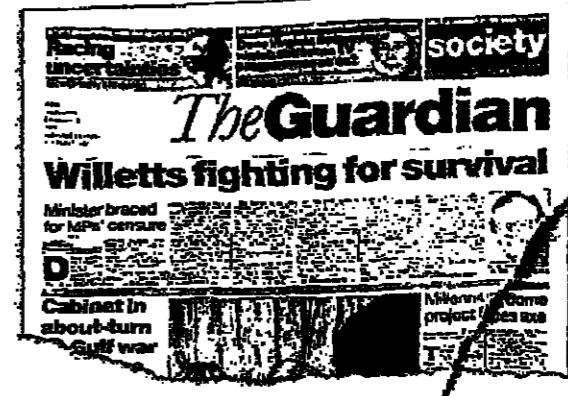
June 8, 1995 The Committee on Members' Interests inquiry into Hamilton's stay at the Ritz concludes he was "imprudent" not to have registered his stay but take no further action.



Sept 30, 1996 Hamilton and Greer drop their libel action against the Guardian the day before the court case is due to begin and agree to pay contribution to newspaper costs.



Oct 5, 1996 Willetts, now Paymaster General, revealed as author of memo to newly created Standards and Privileges Committee, set up by Lord Nolan's reforms, which prompts allegations of a government cover-up.



Dec 11, 1996 After 25 hours of deliberations the Committee concludes Willetts guilty of "dissembling" and he resigns.

How Minister's dissembling turned

THE REPORT/ Ex-Paymaster General's evidence 'seriously aggravated original offence'

Owen Bowcott

THE former Paymaster General, David Willetts, "dissembled" under questioning to the extent that much of his evidence could not be regarded as accurate, the Committee on Standards and Privileges concluded yesterday.

As a junior whip, the Conservative MP for Havant attempted to influence the Commons investigation into cash-for-questions allegations, the committee added. He should not have discussed the affair in October 1994 with the members' interests committee chairman, Sir Geoffrey Johnson-Smith.

terday, the Standards and Privileges Committee unanimously criticised both Mr Willetts and Sir Geoffrey. But the harshest words were reserved for the MP who, until his resignation yesterday, was considered a high flier. Mr Willetts's evidence to the committee had, the MPs said, "substantially aggravated the original offence".

Mr Willetts's memorandum of October 1994 to the whips office and claims that there had been a Conservative attempt to stifle the Commons

'His conversation went beyond what should properly have taken place'

committee investigation was charged with reviewing the relationship between Tory MP Neil Hamilton and Westminster lobbyist Ian Greer.

Later that night Mr Willetts, then a junior whip, recorded his comments on their exchange in the whips office notebook. Intelligence distilled from the notebooks provides an important guide to ministers on day-to-day opinion in the party.

In his note, revealed after Mr Hamilton abandoned his libel action against The Guardian, Mr Willetts wrote that Sir Geoffrey "said No 10 had got in a muddle about the issue which was the main topic of conversation in the Commons that day, October 20 1994."

what was said. It had been a casual conversation rather than a discussion.

But he insisted that he had not been seeking advice on how to investigate the Hamilton affair. "Without being at all conceited about it or pompous, you do not need advice on a point like this," told the Standards and Privileges Committee. "I was quite clear in my own mind, with my experience, where duty lay."

On the question of what exactly had been said, he commented: "words like 'exploiting a good Tory majority' are not in my vocabulary". The committee did not usually

Intellectual not forgiven for flexible principles

THE EX-MINISTER/ Friends are hard to find, writes Ewen MacAskill

DAVID Willetts, until yesterday the Paymaster General, has a reputation in the Conservative Party as an intellectual. But, as a colleague said yesterday, it is not hard to gain a reputation as an intellectual in the Tory party.

He was a loner. Tory Central Office, when asked yesterday for a list of Mr Willetts's friends, responded with enthusiasm and then could not think of any. And yet, in spite of his permanent air of seriousness, those who know him say he is good company.



Sir Geoffrey Johnson Smith and the memorandum recording David Willetts's conversation with him

Said No 10 had got in a muddle about Committee on Members Interests. They claimed it had cleared Neil Hamilton but actually this was only on a complaint about his remarks of his, not on the new allegations. He is now expecting to receive a formal complaint about Hamilton receiving money etc. He could: (i) argue now sub judice get Committee to set it aside or (ii) investigate it as quickly as possible, exploiting good Tory majority at present. We were inclined to go for (i) but he wants our advice. Dhw 20/10/94

Clear victory for self-regulation

REFORMS/A crucial test passed, reports David Hencke

PARLIAMENT yesterday passed its first crucial test in putting its house in order since accepting the broad thrust of the reforms proposed by Lord Nolan, the life peer appointed by John Major to raise standards in public life.

The composition of the committee is key to the success of the process. It is chaired by Tony Newton, a Cabinet minister and Leader of the House. Its members include prominent Tory loyalists like Dame Jill Knight, a member of the 1922 committee, former ministers Sir Archie Hamilton and Sir David Mitchell, rebels such as Quentin Davies, the MP for Stamford, and independent minded members such as Iain Duncan Smith, MP for Chingford. On the Labour side it includes Ann Taylor, the shadow leader of the house, strong minded individualists such as Dale Campbell-Savours, MP for Workington, and old hands like Ernie Ross, MP for Dundee, West.

This harsh judgment reflects the feeling of many in the party. His writing, Modern Conservatism and attack on what he saw as Tony Blair's gurus were interesting rather than influential, not enough to forgive the unseemly speed with which he had switched loyalties from Lady Thatcher to John Major: this was not the action of a real thinker, someone with consistent, well thought out principles. "He is a weathervane for the dominant view in the party. In 1993 he would have been fully behind Chamberlain over Munich and in 1994 he would have been backing the Churchill government."

Deserving not a shred of sympathy

continued from page 1 partisan. The public will be glad to hear it.

But other paymasters come into the frame. The renaissance of Parliament and politics in the public estimation has some way to go. This may not be Le Carré's Panama, or even Craxi's Italy, and the civil service culture still does sustain a public life that is, for the most part, uncorrupt.

Hamilton still proposes to offer himself for election in the Conservative interest, and may well be assisted in doing so by the slyly processes of the same committee that yesterday congratulated itself for putting the squeeze on Mr Willetts.

These are shocking deformities of the body politic, to contrast with the partial satisfaction Mr Willetts has been obliged to give it. Behind them stands the unresolved scandal of party funding. Mr Major and every minister without exception continue to cling to the indefensible line that giving money to their party, however vast the sum or distant

the residence, should be a private matter. It is one matter on which there's not a single sceptic to be found.

These findings are above party politics which bedevilled the old system — when a government whip, Andrew Mitchell, sat on the Members' Interests Committee, and MPs were so divided that Labour walked out rather than sign a report on the former minister Neil Hamilton's undeclared stay at the Ritz Hotel, Paris, in the original "cash for questions" inquiry in 1994.



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The privileges committee's inquiry was into alleged pressure put on the members' interests committee reviewing the relationship between Tory MP Neil Hamilton, left, and Westminster lobbyist Ian Greer. PHOTOGRAPHS: MARTIN ARGLES, IRL, AND MARTIN GOWEN

a problem into a resignation crisis

vote on party lines, he insisted Sir Geoffrey thought the interpretation put upon their meeting by the former junior whip was "astonishing". Mr Willetts's account was given to the committee initially through a written memorandum, then during two public televised sessions of intensive cross-examination. He recalled meeting Sir Geoffrey by chance late in the afternoon. It was a brief exchange. Later he "jotted down an informal note as whips routinely do. If his note mistakenly implied it was a detailed

discussion, Mr Willetts conceded, that was because he was freshly appointed to the Whips' office and more accustomed to drafting formal policy documents. As for the phrase "exploiting a good Tory majority", he denied this was a reference to using a Tory majority to secure a particular outcome to an enquiry. "I did not attempt in any manner, nor at any time, to pressurise the committee... I do not believe anything improper was said or done during the conversation or thereafter."

tin Davies, the Conservative MP for Stamford and Spalding. Mr Willetts admitted that in his first week as a whip he may have wished to impress colleagues by dramatising the conversation. Asked to explain the words "he wants our advice", Mr Willetts said he meant that "he is in want of advice, he needs advice". Commenting on the evidence, the Standards and Privileges Committee said Sir Geoffrey claimed not to recall the conversation in detail yet was definite in his denial that he had referred to "exploiting a good Tory majority".

As to Mr Willetts's role, the committee's report observes: "The story which appeared in the Guardian on October 20 1994 was not only damaging to the Government and therefore a matter of concern to the government whips." As a new whip, Mr Willetts had evidently "felt it necessary to apply his experience as a policy adviser to present options

The brief but robust conclusions reached by the Standards and Privileges Committee were contained in the final paragraphs of their report. Mr Willetts's original note in the whips' book was a "broadly accurate account of the conversation", the MPs stated. "There was no evidence that he had actively sought out Sir Geoffrey Johnson with the intention of influencing his conduct of the members' interests committee. But, as the note suggested, Mr Willetts took the opportunity to do so" during the course of their exchange.

Sir Geoffrey, on the other hand, should not have participated in such a discussion. It "exceeded the bounds of propriety". Mr Willetts ought not to have discussed the work of the members' interests committee with its chairman. "We regard the conversation as having gone beyond what should properly have taken place." The system of self-regulation which Parliament has established cannot function if members are not frank and open about mistakes that they may have made in the past. The report notes, before reaching its damning final conclusions.

"We cannot accept much of the memorandum submitted to the committee by Mr Willetts, nor much of his oral evidence, as accurate. We are very concerned that any member should disseminate his account to the committee and believe this response by Mr Willetts has substantially aggravated the original offence." Any future investigation of matters of privilege or of complaints about conduct, the report warns, should take evidence in normal practice under oath.

'We cannot accept much of the memorandum submitted by Mr Willetts'

for action and to demonstrate his ability to identify a problem and suggest how it might be solved".

Tea and sympathy for 'a nice man'

THE CONSTITUENCY/ News spoils party, writes Luke Harding

THERE was an air of impending doom yesterday afternoon as the ladies of Havant Conservative Association gathered for their annual Christmas tea. When the news came through shortly after 3.30pm, as the winners of the tombola went up to collect prizes of home-made chutney and knitted Santan dolls, the gentle chinking of teacups and saucers suddenly stopped. Nobody had expected that David Willetts would resign - but resign he had. Somehow the cherry cake didn't quite taste the same after that. "We have this tea party every year. We shall remember this one," said Doris Pine, president of the Havant ladies committee, minutes after the bombshell had been dropped. "I'm absolutely shocked. I am very disgusted by the whole thing. I think David has been treated in the most dreadful way."

"Two brains and no common sense," he said. "I think he was a bit naive. It was his first couple of weeks in the whips' office and he had only just taken over his duties," she said. Mr Willetts has represented the affluent Hampshire constituency since 1992, when he enjoyed a 17,000-strong majority over the Liberal Democrats. While some townsfolk say he has a high local profile (he does his shopping at Waitrose on Saturdays) others complain that he spends too little time on constituency affairs and puts his career first. Conservative party stalwarts in Havant had watched the drama of Mr Willetts's role in the cash for questions affair with interest - but had not expected the brutal denunciation that came yesterday. Ted Gale, the Havant party chairman, spoke to the MP yesterday morning and found him "upbeat". Bob McCartney, a retired lorry driver who voted Tory at the last election, said he would not do so again. "If he had been up to naughtiness he should chuck it all in - not just as a minister but also as an MP," he said. Others were equally disillusioned. John Fenketh, a retired lecturer, said politicians got wrapped up in a "fantasy world" of their own which bore no relation to local issues. But he



A sombre mood at the Tories' Christmas tea party in Havant, Mr Willetts's constituency

be impressed with the Paymaster General's decision to fall on his sword. "I'm fed up with Westminster politics, but I put the Conservatives back into power each time." Lynne Armstrong, Labour's prospective parliamentary candidate for Havant, claimed there had been a 27 per cent swing from the Conservatives to Labour in the seat since 1992. She called on Mr Willetts to step down as an MP and fight a by-election. "He was involved in a cover-up and then he tried to cover up his cover-up," she said.

Meanwhile, the members of Havant Conservative Association left their Georgian townhouse HQ in low spirits and trooped into the December cold. And what of Quentin Davies, the Tory MP whose savage interrogation of Mr Willetts during the Commons Standards and Privileges committee hearings probably prompted his demise? "With friends like that, who needs enemies?" commented Mrs Carpenter, before trudging off into the night.

Man of honour bucks trend for holding on

RESIGNATIONS/ Alan Travis on a rare example of going with grace

DAVID WILLETTS is a man of honour, they say, because he decided to resign as soon as the jury foreman had read out the verdict. That only seems unusual these days because so many ministers in John Major's government have been driven out of office days or even weeks after the verdict has been delivered. In Westminster folklore nobody has really resigned "on principle" since the "good old days" of 1982 when Lord Carrington and his Foreign Office team of Humphrey Atkins and Richard Luce resigned en masse over the Falklands. David Mellor's Cabinet resignation in September 1992 was the first of the Major government and the Prime Minister's desire to

protect his close and personal friend set the tone for the next three years. Northern Ireland minister Michael Mates resigned in June 1993. It was the inscription: "Don't let the buggers get you down" as much as the gift of the inscribed watch to Asil Nadir that did for him. Norman Lamont didn't step down as Chancellor until six months after the pound had been bounced out of the Exchange Rate Mechanism by the speculators. Cecil Parkinson was perhaps the greatest example of the successful "come back kid." He was said to be Thatcher's chosen successor until his career was wrecked by his affair with Sarah Keays becoming public. The real trouble for John Major came in January 1994

when there were four scandals and three resignations within the month after his Back to Basics speech. Environment minister Tim Yeo was named as the father of a child born to a Hackney Conservative councillor, Julia Stent. Four days later junior transport minister Lord Caitness resigned after his wife committed suicide and her parents alleged she had been distressed by his relationship with another woman. Mr Major let it be known that in future he would no longer protect those who found their private lives all over the Sunday papers. The culture swiftly changed to a government where nobody appeared to resign. William Waldegrave refused to go after the Scott inquiry despite telling MPs it was defensible to mislead the Commons. On the yardstick David Willetts will be quickly forgiven.

The letters

In his resignation letter, David Willetts said: "I have read the report of the Committee of Standards and Privileges which has been published this afternoon. I am sorry my integrity has been called into question, especially as throughout the committee hearing I told the truth and I stand by my evidence to the committee. However, in the light of your report, I believe the only honourable course is to resign. "I look forward to support-

ing the Government from the backbenches." John Major replied: "Thank you for your letter today following the report of the Committee on Standards and Privileges. "I very much regret your resignation as Paymaster General, but I accept your reasons. It is consistent with the dignified way that you have conducted yourself that you should feel it right to stand down from the Govern-

ment in the light of the committee's report. "I am most grateful for all your hard work through the years, both during your time as a minister and before. You had, in particular, been playing a key role as Paymaster General in helping to co-ordinate the planning and presentation of government policy. "I am grateful for your continued support and I look forward to working with you to bring about another victory at the general election."

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Analysis/Failure over pact would deal blow to single currency timetable, reports John Palmer

Uncertain climax nears

THE drive to create a single European currency will reach an uncertain climax tonight when European Union finance ministers meet in Dublin ahead of tomorrow's full-scale summit attended by John Major and the 14 other EU heads of government.

If Germany, which has spearheaded the push for the euro, and its partners can agree the terms of a so-called stability pact, the summiters are expected to declare European monetary union (Emu) in 1999 to be irreversible.

A stability pact would include automatic sanctions against single currency countries which run up excessive budget deficits. Opinions differ widely as to whether such a pact, including the tough conditions and penalties sought by Germany, can be agreed, or made to stick.



The EC's promotional logo for the single currency

This week, France publicly differed with Bonn over the stringency of such purely financial conditions, insisting there should be political control over such decisions.

While the outstanding issues are highly technical, they go to the heart of the debate about whether a single currency will enhance or

restrict economic prosperity, growth and employment prospects across the continent.

Yet there is more flexibility in the evolving system than some Euro-sceptics admit. Countries seeking to join the currency will be judged, early in 1998, on more than simple compliance with the details of the Maastricht Treaty criteria for monetary union.

Providing they are deemed to be on target for lasting economic convergence with the other Emu candidates, countries with a budget deficit a little above the 3 per cent of GDP limit may still qualify.

The proposed rules covering a stability pact are similarly more flexible than some Euro-sceptics claim. EU members agree there may be "temporary and exceptional" circumstances which justify a country running up a budget deficit above 3 per cent.

Germany, with the sole support of the Netherlands, has until recently insisted this should only be where a country is in a serious recession. But there has been movement on this issue, too.

A serious recession was originally defined as one in which output falls by 2 per cent over 12 successive months — a rare event. But the German finance minister, Theo Waigel, has agreed to reduce this to 1.5 per cent.

Most EU governments — including Britain — believe that if GDP falls by more than 0.5 per cent or if there are other unexpected economic circumstances, the Council of Ministers should be free to decide whether or not to ease the stability pact disciplines temporarily — in other words, to exercise political control, as France has urged.

Germany takes a harder line. For the strict monetarist ayatollahs of the German Bundesbank, this looks like a dangerous "fudge".

For all the British government's declared opposition to Emu fudge, the more flexible approach has the strong support of the Chancellor, Kenneth Clarke.

He echoed the views of almost all his EU colleagues recently when he accused the government in Bonn of taking an exaggerated and dogmatic approach to the stability pact. For Helmut Kohl, tough talking on the spot is tactically necessary to reassure financial conservatives in Frankfurt and elsewhere.

Yet on most of the main issues at the heart of Emu, the Germans have, in practice, proved more flexible than their rhetoric would suggest. They recently agreed to limit the potential fines on a recalcitrant single currency country to just 0.5 per cent of its GDP, whereas before they

were pressing for graduated but limitless penalties.

A failure by tonight's meeting and the summit to bridge the gap between Germany and members like France, which want less onerous penalties built into the pact, would deal a blow to the entire single currency timetable.

If disagreement then led to open disagreement between Germany and the rest of the EU about monetary union philosophy, the financial markets might conclude the whole project was a write-off.

Much expert opinion thinks this unlikely. Germany has already suggested the stability pact negotiations could continue up to next June's Amsterdam summit, if necessary. Meanwhile, it is argued in Brussels, the costs of not moving to a single currency are, for the EU as a whole, far greater than the costs of monetary union itself.

Clarke woos sceptics with nod to Emu risk

Commons debate

Michael White Political Editor

THE Chancellor, Kenneth Clarke, last night tried to ease the fears of hostile Euro-sceptic MPs when he warned the Commons that the proposed single currency could break up with extremely damaging consequences if the European Union rushed too quickly to meet its 1999 deadline.

While setting out the positive case for British membership if the terms were right, the Chancellor also admitted the potential risks of abandoning sterling and said that getting it right was far more important than what he called the Maastricht Treaty's "weakest part" — the artificial timetable which could see the euro launched in barely two years.

Mr Clarke faced constant interruptions and sharp criticisms from his own back benches at the start of the two-day Commons debate before this weekend's Dublin summit, where samples of the new currency will be displayed in public for the first time. But he stuck to his declared intention to defend the Cabinet's "wait and see" policy on the single currency as being in Britain's best interest and "no soft option".

High level British involvement in the negotiations to establish the euro had significantly improved it, he said in the face of sceptic scorn.

In a withering anti-single currency speech, which again hinted at eventual British withdrawal from Europe, Mr Clarke's predecessor, Norman Lamont, said it was "crazy logic" that a nation which could not make up its own mind on the euro would thereby obtain greater influence at the talks. Mr Clarke stood his ground.

As the debate got underway the Chancellor won support from pro-European heavyweights on both sides such as Sir Edward Heath and Douglas Hurd, and mock sympathy from his Labour shadow, Gordon Brown, who faced his own tormentors for confirming that a Blair government would want the so-called Maastricht convergence criteria for economic and monetary union to be "flexibly" interpreted by ministers.

Labour is hoping to defeat

the Government on Monday in the annual vote on the EU's fishing policy, as it did with Tory sceptic help last Christmas. Though both sides taunted each other over a hard core of 80 sceptics in each party, Mr Brown claimed 95 per cent support for Labour's EU policies — while Mr Clarke dare not put his own to a vote, he claimed.

Mr Clarke aligned himself with Germany in wanting the convergence criteria enforced strongly. "One of the key risks to the whole enterprise must be the possibility that it is set up on the basis of political compromise rather than hard-nosed economics," he warned.

The case for economic and monetary union included a stable exchange rate — by contrast with the sharp rise in the pound which was alarming exporters — lower interest rates and cheaper transaction costs, plus "more intense direct competition" between states whose prices and wage differences would be obvious to each other.

Unless France and Germany followed Britain's free market approach they would find it difficult to compete. "It is even arguable that we might well benefit more from it than most other aspiring member states," he said to backbench silence.

To balance his message he also warned against fudging the Maastricht terms for weaker countries, but sceptics were not appeased.

Challenged by arch-sceptic Tony Marlow about why he thought monetary union would not threaten the nation, Mr Clarke said: "If I shared that belief, I would be against Emu."

No Conservative politician would accept a federalist European superstate and fewer and fewer EU politicians wanted one, he said, a point passionately rejected by Mr Lamont and other MPs, who said political union was the explicit aim of many German leaders.

To shouts of "It is!" about a looming superstate from his own side, he warned: "Treating the debate about Emu as if it were a debate about the creation of a superstate arouses public fears and deprives the public of sensible information about the issues."

But Labour's Peter Shore asked how a self-confident nation could really imagine itself "no better than a rattlepated local authority" in managing its economic policies.

Leader comment, page 8

Fruits of EU leave city's voters full of apathy

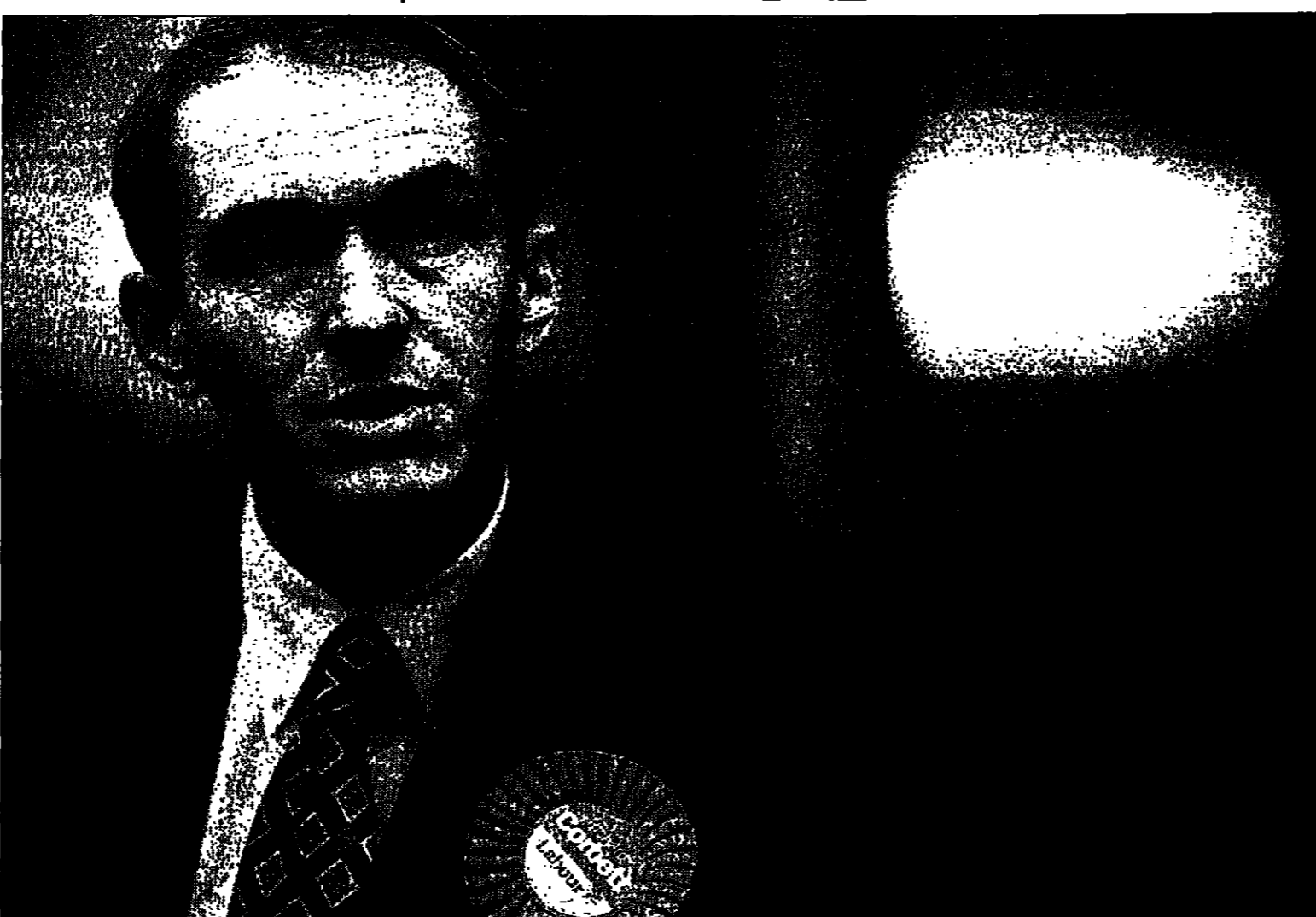
Peter Hetherington

SURROUNDED by the fruits of Europe, and bombarded by election leaflets, Richard tried to summon a little enthusiasm for that great debate about Britain's future.

"A bit stupid this Common Market, isn't it? Personally I only buy British produce, but if they grow it over there I suppose I've got to sell it."

As part of Merseyside geared up for the polls today, talk of a single currency and closer economic integration seemed a continent away from the veg shop Richard manages in Liverpool's Walton district.

The shelves were bulging with bright green Golden Delicious from France, small baskets of clementines from Spain and assorted produce from the Mediterranean sunbelt. But his views on the European Union matched the gloom of another grey Merseyside day.



Richard Corbett, the Labour candidate in today's Euro-election, which is likely to see a turnout of less than 15 per cent PHOTOGRAPH: CHRIS THOMSON

"The French treat us like crap, blockade our lorries — now the Greeks are at it, and we're supposed to take it all lying down. What has Europe done for us?"

Quite a lot, actually. It is one of the great ironies of Britain's forgotten byelection today, for the vacant Euro-seat of Merseyside

West, that so many electors are prepared to dismiss Brussels in a conurbation receiving more EU hand-outs than any other part of England.

In Eurospeak, Merseyside qualifies as an "objective one" area because earnings are only 75 per cent of the EU's average. As

a result, it is midway through a £650 million aid programme designed largely to provide more jobs and training.

But with an unemployment rate of over 17 per cent across the constituency, which stretches from inner Liverpool to Southport, few seemed to appreciate the scale of this hand-out.

"Look at the state of this area," pleaded Margaret Williams behind the counter of the veg shop. "There's still a recession going on, too many people out of work in Liverpool. I

don't see anything from Europe that brought benefit to us."

And then, of course, there is the distant prospect of Britain joining a single currency. A customer said: "It's about not changing your money when you go abroad, isn't it? Might be a good thing."

Sadly for Richard Corbett, the Labour candidate in today's contest, caused by the death last September of the MEP Tim Stewart, too many seemed sceptical about the euro — which will probably make little difference to his prospects.

On a turnout which is likely to be under a pitiful 15 per cent, he will assuredly join the ranks of 625 other MEPs at Strasbourg. Labour took 58 per cent of the vote in 1994.

The Liberal candidate, a university law lecturer, Kieron Reid, said he had never been asked a question on the doorstep about Europe during the campaign. "Bizarre, isn't it?"

The Tory candidate, Jeremy Myers, managing director of an umbrella company, said: "People are stopping and thinking about it."

Cause cuts across party

Michael White charts diverse individual stances that defy the conventional labels

Anti

CONSERVATIVES: the sovereign nation state is central to the romantic Tory vision of national identity, which has suffered many indignities in Britain's, or more precisely England's, post-imperial retreat.

Hard core Euro-sceptics like the "whiplash eight" include such Tories as Nicholas Fudge and Richard Shepherd, but also Little England populists like Teresa Gorman and Tony Marlow.

There is also a group which regards itself as pro-European, and voted yes in 1975, but is strongly anti-federalist. Norman Lamont, David Heathcoat-Amory, John Redwood and Lady Thatcher. Also Bill Cash, the most fanatical Euro-wonk of all. Lord (Nigel) Lawson is a pro-European opponent of a single currency.

The Cabinet contains at least five opponents of the single currency: Michael Howard, Michael Portillo, Peter Lilley, William Hague, and Lord Cumberlege. They say you cannot have free movement of goods and people without a common currency like the United States, he says. Younger MPs like Edwina Currie and Quentin Davies take a brave stand, but older Tories, who remember the war, are the most fervent Euro-idealists. The ex-Chancellor, Lord Howe, also favours a single currency, as do "Heath's proteges", includ-

ing David Hunt and John Gummer.

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Rowdy field day

Sketch



Simon Hoggart

ALICE Mahon (Lab. Hall-fax) tried to raise the subject of David Willetts, but she got nowhere at all. The House of Commons rarely debates the subject everyone is talking about; it's not allowed.

A backbencher: "Madam Speaker, Godzilla has been sighted in Docklands where he has just eaten the Canary Wharf Tower. Are you aware of a government statement?"

Madam Speaker: "I have received no such notification. Ten minute rule bill, Mr John Heppell!"

Yesterday's ten minute rule bill symbolised the gap between the parties. Mr Heppell wanted more fire regulations. His opponent, Anthony Steen, wanted fewer. He had a host of fun figures. Why, there had been only 411,000 fires in 1994. Eh? Fire regulations increased the burden on industry and made us less competitive. If it wasn't for fire regulations, we could have built 500 new hospitals. Even if this were true, he must know that they would all be full of people having skin grafts. Finally Ken Clarke rose to begin the debate on Europe. Two weeks ago Tories were forming a lynch mob to hang the Prime Minister for not giving them a debate. Now it was here, and the Tory benches were perhaps two-thirds full.

I saw Michael Fabricant slide into position behind the Chancellor, essential for getting on TV in time for the glittering party he's throwing

tomorrow. Then Mr Major arrived, and almost imperceptibly, Mr Fabricant inched into the place behind him.

Readers may remember Martin Peters, who played in England's great 1960s team. He was hailed as a player before his time, because while he never touched the ball, he was always in the perfect position. Mr Fabricant can make that same claim.

And like a football crowd, the Conservative Euro-sceptics were all at one end of the ground, the better to barrack Ken Clarke.

Clarke was at his most Kenish, making broad, plinking statements as if they were the most obvious truisms. People who suggested that a single currency would lead to a European super-state were only arousing public fears, he said. This was greeted with sustained barracking.

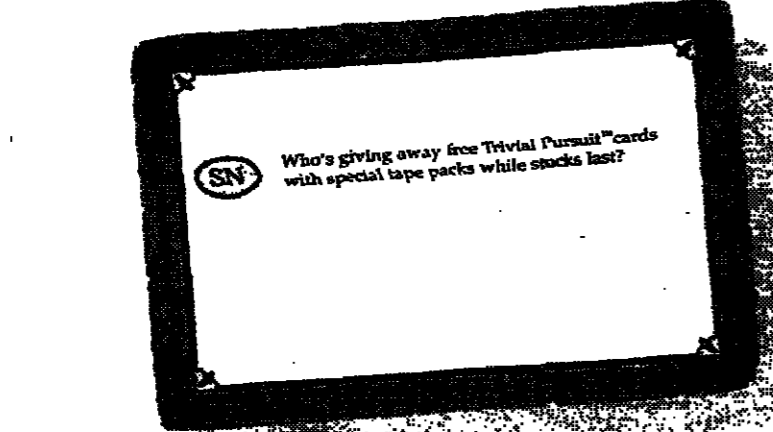
Naturally, in response he not only trailed his coat but dragged a flatbed truck of fire. "Fewer and fewer people on the Continent see Emu as a means towards federalism," he added, to even greater fury from the hooligans.

Norman Lamont produced the names of various European persons who had told him that Emu was meant to create a federal state. Mr Clarke scornfully quoted Helmut Kohl back at him, adding airily: "Of course, the president of the Bank of Baden-Wuerttemberg might say something different..."

He was lavish in his praise of John Major, no doubt because of last week's notorious BBC lunch at Chez Nico where he rubbished the man.

Gordon Brown hinted that he had been tipsy. "Wine played less of a part in that lunch than you seem to believe. But that is the least of my complaints against the two BBC journalists."

In fact they were all shopped by Labour's Frank Dobson. Might I recommend, in the Westminster area, the Seafood, Wilton Street? A wonderful fish and chips lunch with wine, for less than a tanner, and never a politician in sight.



ANOS

صبراً من الامل



The blast at the Israeli embassy in 1994, caused by a bomb in an Audi driven by an untraced smart middle-aged woman who left carrying a Harrods bag

Dead fan's brother gets £200,000

Martin Wainwright and Claire Dyer

THE controversial pattern of damages payments following the Hillsborough disaster took another unexpected turn yesterday when a grief-stricken Liverpool fan was awarded £201,729 for post-traumatic stress disorder following the death of his half-brother in the tragedy. John McCarthy, aged 35, became only the second relative of any of the 96 victims to receive a large payment, compared with 18 awards to South Yorkshire police officers affected by stress and ill-health after the catastrophic 1989 FA Cup semi-final.

The award was granted against the Chief Constable of South Yorkshire at the High Court in London, but Mr Justice Sachs stressed that it should not be regarded as setting a precedent. His ruling was based on the "instant facts of this case" and the particular evidence of strong emotional ties between Mr McCarthy and his half-brother, Ian Glover, aged 20, who was crushed to death. The judge described how Mr McCarthy had collapsed over Ian's body after hurrying from a different terrace at the Sheffield Wednesday ground. He had attempted suicide on Ian's 21st birthday which he had been planning before the Liverpool-Nottingham Forest match as a big family celebration. The court also heard that Mr McCarthy had separated from his wife and their two children because of the "catastrophic" change in his personality after Hillsborough. His wife had spoken of the exceptional bond between the two men. Their mother, Theresa Glover, had said: "They were as close as any brothers could be."

Fiennes calls off Antarctic walk

THE attempt by the explorer Sir Ranulph Fiennes to become the first man to walk solo across Antarctica has ended in failure. It emerged last night, writes Nick Vorley. The bid ended when his support team spotted smoke from two distress flares. Sir Ranulph, aged 53, fired the SOS signal after a recurrence of the kidney problems which ended a previous expedition to the North Pole. The expedition's premature end came with Sir Ranulph and his sledges continuing to walk almost a quarter of the way into the 110-day trek. He was slightly behind the Norwegian, Borge Oulund, aged 33, his main rival in a race with other international explorers to become the first to walk alone and unaided across the freezing landscape. Sir Ranulph was drawn to staging the latest trek in the hope of raising £1 million for the breast cancer charity Breakthrough.

Embassy bomb: two guilty

Duncan Campbell and Richard Norton-Taylor on trial verdict for Palestinians who plotted attacks on Jewish targets in London

TWO young, middle-class Palestinians were yesterday convicted of plotting the bomb that blasted the Israeli embassy in July 1994. A third defendant was cleared. Samar Alami, aged 31, and Jawad Botmeh, aged 28, were convicted of conspiring to cause explosions by an 11-1 majority after the jury at the Old Bailey had deliberated for 6½ hours. Mahmoud Abu-Wardeh, aged 26, was acquitted of all charges. A fourth defendant, Nadia Zakra, aged 68, had been cleared earlier in the nine week trial. Mr Justice Garland will pass sentence on Monday after hearing mitigation evidence. Relatives and friends of the convicted pair, who were remanded in custody, swept in the public gallery. The three accused embraced after the verdicts, and Mr Abu-Wardeh mouthed his thanks to the jury. The police said that they will continue the hunt for the woman who placed the bomb. It was just before noon on 20 July 1994 that a silver Audi, registration D201 BGU, driven by a smartly-dressed middle-aged woman, entered Palace Green, the London address of the Israeli embassy. The woman parked outside the house next to the embassy, went to the door of that house, appeared to speak to someone on the intercom and set off for Kensington with a Harrods bag in her hand. The diplomatic protection officer, PC Ian Duncan, approached her, and she explained that she had been asked to return in five minutes and wanted to buy some cigarettes. At 12.10 the bomb exploded. No one was killed or permanently injured by the blast, or a second one just after midnight that night outside a Jewish organisation at Balfour House in Finchley, north London. In letters to two Palestinian newspapers and the Palestinian Liberation Organisation, the bomb was claimed on behalf of a previously unknown group called the Palestinian Resistance Jaffa Group Palestine. But it was six months before any arrests were made. It was one man's sharp memory that helped crack the case. On June 15 1994 he had sold the Audi used in the bombing at a Milton Keynes auction. He recalled in almost



Books and equipment found with guilty pair's fingerprints

photographic detail a BMW driven by one of the purchasers. The anti-terrorist branch set about tracing all the owners of that model in England. The owner of the 1994 was Botmeh. He was put under surveillance, and this established his links with Alami. At the home of Alami's absent uncle in Kensington, hidden in a trapdoor, was a .38 revolver, ammunition, a book on explosives engineering, and guides to avoiding surveillance. The next breakthrough for the police came when the manager of Nationwide storage units in west London opened one unit on which the rental had not been paid. Inside were two self-loading pistols, bomb-making equipment, a book on guerrilla warfare by Che Guevara, and the Grim Reaper by an ex-SAS man. He called the anti-

terrorist branch. Fingerprints linked the pair to the cache. Botmeh was seen by police as the man who was purchasing the cars, using false but similar names. His friend and business associate, Abu-Wardeh, who has a British passport, was also followed. He was acquitted on all counts yesterday. The arrests began on 17 January 1995; seven people were eventually held, of whom four stood trial. The police have always indicated that others who have not been traced were involved and have said that they will continue the search for them. The Crown case was that the pair shared the beliefs of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, disapproved of the appointment policies of Yasser Arafat, and were determined to take a more militant stance. In court, the accused denied this, saying that a bomb outside the Israeli embassy would be counter-productive. The defence was mounted by three of the most experienced bomb trial QCs: Michael Mansfield for Botmeh and Alami, Rock Tansey for Abu-Wardeh, and Helena Kennedy for Zakra. Mr Mansfield presented the jury with a history of the Middle East from the Palestinian perspective, in which Israeli forces and Jewish settlers waged a terrorist war and the Israeli government had "absolutely no moral or legal right, no right at all doing what they are doing". Botmeh and Alami accepted their connections to the explosives but argued they had not planned to cause explosions in Britain, the offence with which they were charged. They claimed that they had been researching explosives with a view to assisting the Palestinian cause in the occupied territories. The bombs led to allegations of lack of co-operation between police and MI5 and the intervention of the Israeli secret service, Mossad. However, Detective Superintendent Bill Emerson, the senior officer in the case, insisted in court it was a straightforward police investigation. He added: "There were no intelligence secrets about this job. There was an intelligence vacuum". The arrests shocked the Palestinian community in London: the families involved were all well known, and many were involved in Palestinian charitable organisations. A spokesman for the Israeli embassy said that there would be no comment on the case until sentences had been passed.

Woman studying for second master's, man married to policeman's daughter

SAMAR Alami, aged 31, is half Palestinian and half Lebanese, and was born in Beirut; she holds a Lebanese passport. Her father worked for the Arab Bank in Beirut. One of four sisters and two brothers, she came to London in 1984, took a master's degree in engineering at Imperial College and, at the time of her arrest, was studying for a second master's at City University. Her speciality is water resources management, which her family said she had hoped to put to practical effect in Gaza. She was active on Palestinian women's issues, and a member of the Medical Aid to Palestine charity, Amnesty International, and the Friends of the Arab Bank in Beirut. Around 70 people, mainly British, offered to stand bail for her; Lord Gilmour, the former Cabinet minister, a friend of the family, was one of her sureties. Her supporters in the Friends of Samar Alami group included MPs Harry Cohen, Tony Benn and Jeremy



Samar Alami and Jawad Botmeh, convicted yesterday

Corbyn, as well as Jewish and Arab activists. Jawad Botmeh, aged 28, a friend of Alami, was born in Bethlehem and his family village is Batir, five miles from Jerusalem. He is Palestinian with a Jordanian passport. He went to Leicester and

Nottingham universities, where he was active in student politics, and has a master's degree in engineering. His father, who funded his education, is a bank manager on the West Bank; his mother works for the United Nations Works and Relief Agency. He lives in Bloomsbury, central London, and is married to a woman from Leicester, the daughter of a police officer, although some of his friends were unaware of the fact; they have a child. Alami gave him financial assistance. Botmeh never made any secret of his campaigning for an independent Palestine. In the witness box he spoke of the "degradation and repression" faced by Palestinians in Israel and said that Britain had given him a "sense of freedom".

Leah case nightclub link to triple drug killings

SECURITY at a nightclub at the centre of Leah Betts' death was organised by a man who was later a victim of murder, Norwich crown court was told yesterday. The jury heard that the ecstasy tablet which caused Leah's death in November last year was bought in the nightclub, called Raquel's, in Basildon, Essex. Security at Raquel's was at the time organised by Anthony Tucker, 36, of Fobbing, Essex, one of three men found shot dead in a Range Rover at Rettendon, Essex, in December last year. But the manager of Raquel's at the time Leah died said that he had no idea that Tucker had been involved in the Essex drugs scene. David Sims said he did not accept that Raquel's had a reputation for drug abuse. Under cross-examination he said he knew Tucker but did not know his reputation. He accepted that the club had a reputation for being rough and occasionally troublesome. "But at no time did I feel it had a reputation for drug abuse and that was never intimated to me by anyone."

BBC warns of warfare over digital TV

Andrew Cull Media Correspondent

GUERRILLA warfare could erupt between broadcasters because of inadequate government rules on the introduction of digital television, the BBC warned yesterday. Viewers could face costly "hardware wars" if the Government's regulations are not tightened, Patricia Hodgson, the corporation's director of policy and planning, claimed. The BBC fears Rupert Murdoch's BSkyB will gain an unfair stranglehold over the new technology when up to 200 digital satellite channels

are launched next autumn. An 11th-hour appeal to change the regulations was made by the BBC yesterday following the Department of Trade and Industry's two-week consultation period. The BBC claims BSkyB — expected to be first into the market with the set-top box needed to decode digital signals — will control access for other broadcasters and the important subscriber management systems used to collect pay-TV revenue. It fears the electronic programme guides which will navigate viewers through a multi-channel world will highlight BSkyB's programmes while relegating a menu of BBC services to obscurity. The Government, which is unlikely to make significant changes to the rules, plans to table the regulations in the Commons before Christmas. It says they ensure fair and non-discriminatory access for all broadcasters. Don Cruickshank, director general of the watchdog Ofcom, has powers to intervene over anti-competitive behaviour. The rules will come into effect after 21 sitting days, unless MPs force a debate and possibly a vote. Geoff Hoon, Labour's technology spokesman, said the party would seek to initiate a Commons debate on the regulations. He was meeting Mr Cruick-

shank yesterday and hoped Ofcom would be firm in ensuring other broadcasters had access to BSkyB's set-top box technology. Ms Hodgson said: "The regulations are complex and opaque. There is some risk of continuing guerrilla warfare between box manufacturers, broadcasters, and Ofcom as they try to make sense of them." Set-top box operators should be required to provide necessary information to allow broadcasters to plan digital services in time to launch alongside BSkyB. Operators should also be required to license their boxes to other broadcasters and manufacturers. That would ensure compatibility between satellite and terrestrial boxes. The BBC wants to put its free-to-air services — BBC1, BBC2 in widescreen and 24-hour TV news — and its planned subscription channels on digital satellite, terrestrial and cable systems to ensure it remains a universally available broadcaster. Digital terrestrial is expected to launch in mid-1998 offering up to 36 channels. The ITV Association and Channel 4 were also critical of the DTI rules. They said they wanted broadcasters to be able to distribute their own smart cards and manage their own base of subscribers.

Norris to lead Tories' poll bid in South-east

STEVEN Norris, the flamboyant former transport minister, is today expected to be appointed to spearhead the Tories' general election campaign in the South-east. However, the 51-year-old member for Epping Forest in Essex — who is giving up his seat at the election — is certain to be targeted by Labour as the epitome of Tory sleaze because of his exotic love life and rapid acquisition of some £200,000 of transport-related jobs since leaving office. A friend of Mr Norris said yesterday: "He is lining up jobs after the election, and he thinks it would be a good use of his time until then... and also a lot of fun." The father of two, now sepa-

Milosevic's flashback mouthpiece

'I am a retarded, juvenile, easily manipulated, pro-fascist'

Julian Borger reports on Belgrade's ham-fisted propaganda and the mockery on the streets

IT WAS another time-warp moment in Slobodan Milosevic's Serbia: a cavernous conference chamber in Belgrade dominated by an industrial-size piece of socialist realist art depicting muscular Yugoslav heroes defending a tattered red flag against an unseen foe.

— whose results were annulled almost everywhere the opposition won — had "gone through successfully". The daily 100,000-strong protests in the streets outside were merely a "distraction".

Nato ignores Karadzic sighting

UNITED NATIONS police in Bosnia said yesterday they had spotted the Bosnian Serb leader and indicted war criminal Radovan Karadzic in the Serbian government seat Pale, but the Nato-led peace implementation force took no action to arrest him.

which was suddenly closed, due to "damage to a coaxial antenna cable" supposedly caused by heavy rain.

a pro-regime tabloid, Flash. For a week before its launch, television advertisements promised startling revelations about the funding of opposition protests by "cocaine cartels" and the infiltration of the Bosnian army by "disguised Muslim soldiers".

concentration camps — why foreigners are backing Hrc. The piece darkly hints at the destabilisation of Serbia by outside forces, but by the end readers are none the wiser about the threat of concentration camps.



A striker uses his flag to protect himself from the rain as thousands of Spanish workers march through Madrid yesterday. PHOTOGRAPH: SANTIAGO LYON

Aznar faces the wrath of Spain's civil servants

Adela Gooch in Madrid ONE-DAY strike by civil servants protesting at government plans to impose a pay freeze threw Spain into chaos yesterday.

"You should be grateful you have a job." Mr Aznar said he was keen to negotiate with the unions but that the pay freeze was an "irreversible" part of his austerity budget, which is designed to lower Spain's deficit so that it can qualify for the single European currency.

Workers' Commissions and the General Union of Workers claim the pay freeze runs counter to an agreement with the previous Socialist government which guaranteed wages would keep pace with inflation.

Wary Germans slow off the mark

Ian Traynor in Bonn THE German government's propaganda campaign to persuade reluctant Germans to forgo the Deutschmark for the single European currency appears to be falling on deaf ears.

about the euro, according to the survey by the prestigious Allensbacher polling institute. Opinion polls show a 2-1 majority against the common currency.

particularly the French, however, are less than keen to bow to German demands for foolproof rigour and exclusive European central bank control of the single currency.

be worth only DM80,000 if Bonn bows to French-led demands to relax the stiff terms of the single currency.

Moscow's softer stance takes Nato by surprise

John Palmer in Brussels NATO governments claimed last night that they had achieved a "breakthrough" by securing Russia's tacit consent for the gradual expansion of the alliance into central Europe; in return, Moscow will be offered a privileged security partnership.

Defence chief to leave army PRESIDENT Boris Yeltsin yesterday told the defence minister, Igor Rodionov, to leave the armed forces to become Russia's first civilian defence minister in more than 70 years.

Despite Mr Primakov's public reiteration of Russian opposition to enlargement, Nato governments seemed convinced last night that Moscow had now accepted that some expansion was irreversible.

News in brief

Alaska on volcano alert

Pavlof volcano, at the tip of the Alaskan peninsula, has begun throwing gritty ash 15,000ft or more into the atmosphere, prompting a red alert at the Alaskan Volcano Observatory.

One for Clinton

A Democrat victory over a Republican incumbent in a Texas run-off from the November elections has reduced the Republican majority in the United States Congress by two, writes Richard Thomas in Washington.

Mutiny victims

The master and chief engineer of a German-owned ship are missing, believed dead in the Gulf of Guinea off West Africa after two of the crew mutinied, Lloyd's shipping service reported. The mutineers were overpowered. — Reuter.

Burundian dead

The UN human rights office said yesterday that the Burundian army killed at least 1,100 people in October and November, including hundreds of Hutu refugees returning from Zaire. — Reuter.

Hot property

Porcelain made secretly for Mao Zedong at the height of his power is being sold at auction in Beijing on Saturday. Aides ordered pieces of unsurpassed quality fired at 1,400°C to one-up the emperors, who had to be content with 1,300°C firing. — AP.

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صبراً من الامل

Saudis feed US mood for Iran reprisal

Martin Walker in Washington

THE Clinton administration is considering sharply escalating its campaign against Iran, possibly with covert and military action, after it received "highly persuasive" evidence of Tehran's involvement in the bombings of US military facilities in Saudi Arabia.

The Saudi government wants the evidence, which it passed on to the FBI, made public so that world opinion can be persuaded of Iran's responsibility.

Sources within the US administration have told the Guardian that senior Saudi officials have proposed a joint air-strike against Iranian military facilities which have supported terrorist activities.

The FBI's director, Louis Freeh, has briefed the National Security Council on the evidence he was given by the Saudi interior minister, Prince Nayef, when he visited Riyadh last month. This points to Iran's involvement in the truck bombing of a US base at Dhahran in June, which killed 19 American troops and personnel.

The FBI, the CIA and the National Security Agency are checking the Saudi dossier to confirm Riyadh's interpretation. Israeli, British and German intelligence are seeking further evidence.

Germany's efforts to woo Tehran ended after a warrant was issued for Iran's security minister's arrest on charges of arranging the killings of Iranian dissidents in Berlin.

The Washington Post reported yesterday that the Saudi evidence "included confessions extracted from some of 40 Saudi Shiites detained and accused of involvement in the bombing, results of Saudi wiretaps and other electronic eavesdropping, and a detailed

account of the movements of key alleged conspirators into and out of Saudi Arabia, Lebanon's Bekaa valley, Damascus and Tehran."

Washington has found the dossier electrifying, especially as US naval intelligence reports claim Iranian influence was behind this year's wave of riots and demonstrations in Bahrain, the Gulf island sheikhdom which is home to the US fifth fleet.

The navy has also voiced alarm at Iranian naval exercises in the Gulf last month which included the test-firing of a Chinese-built C-802 anti-ship cruise missile.

The US has already stepped up its attempts to destabilise the Iranian regime: it is making television broadcasts into Iran, and preparing to launch a "Radio Free Iran", modelled on the Radio Liberty which was broadcast into the Soviet Union during the cold war.

Radio Free Iran is being closely co-ordinated with Radio Israel's Farsi-language programming, which has been given top priority by Uri Lubrani, co-ordinator of USI's policies towards Lebanon and Iran.

Mr Lubrani, Israel's last ambassador to Tehran, now works from the defence ministry and, on a recent visit to Washington, told US officials to broadcast "without restraint, no holds barred, just like Radio Free Europe".

The campaign has strong bipartisan support, with the Republican speaker of the House, Newt Gingrich, urging more funds for covert operations "designed to force the replacement of the current regime in Iran".

Leader pages in American newspapers are arguing for military strikes as part of a tougher response to states sponsoring terrorism. They cite the state department's latest official report that Tehran is "the premier state sponsor of international terrorism".



Inmates at El Pavon prison in Guatemala City demonstrate for an amnesty which could form part of a peace accord to be signed between the government and leftwing rebels. Prisoners handed over weapons as a sign of support for a deal. PHOTOGRAPH: JORGE UZON

French threaten to veto UN candidate

Paris is accused of pique for refusing to endorse the Security Council's choice of successor to Boutros Boutros-Ghali

Mark Tran in New York and Ian Black in London

LANGUAGE wars and power rivalries were becoming entangled at the United Nations last night as France threatened to veto the candidacy of Kofi Annan, the Ghanaian who has now emerged as the frontrunner to become the next secretary-general.

In a second straw poll, France was again the only one of the five permanent members of the Security Council to oppose Mr Annan, a veteran UN diplomat and currently its head of peace-keeping, as the replacement for Boutros Boutros-Ghali.

Eleven members voted to "encourage" him and four, including France, to "discourage" him.

Under a procedure that has been criticised for being secretive and undemocratic, the United States and Britain have lined up behind Mr Annan, while France is backing Amara Essy, the foreign minister of the Ivory Coast.

Both Washington and Paris have made it clear they will block the other's choice, leaving open the prospect of deadlock that can be broken either by the emergence of another African candidate or, less probably, someone from another part of the world.

But time is pressing as the Security Council has only until December 30 to find a replacement for the Egyptian incumbent. And France's lone opposition is not going down well with the rest of the council.

Diplomats have angrily accused Paris of blocking the Ghanaian just to retaliate

against the US for vetoing Mr Boutros-Ghali, a French protégé, for a second term. "France has no objection to Annan's personal qualifications. It is motivated by a sense of political pique. It's saying to the Americans, 'You're not the only people who can play this game,'" one source said.

British officials went public with their displeasure after President Jacques Chirac told Nelson Mandela at the weekend that he would veto Tanzania's Salim Ahmed Salim, secretary-general of the Organisation of African Unity, because he was not fluent in French.

"We think it's a bit rich," said one well-placed Whitehall source, "and it's a great pity that Africans should now feel that non-French speakers are going to be ruled out. We would like to get this resolved quickly. It all depends now on whether the French think there is any tactical mileage in being out."

As the battle moves into its final stage, Mr Annan is starting to win semi-public plaudits from his backers. British officials have pointed out that he does speak French — having served with the UN in Geneva — and therefore meets Mr Chirac's language criterion.

Aged 58, married and a father of three, he has no hint of scandal attached to his name. "In four years I have never heard a single scurrilous rumour about him, which must be pretty rare for the UN," said one New York-based diplomat.

Mr Annan did have some run-ins over Bosnia with the feisty Madeleine Albright — then US ambassador to the UN and now secretary of state-designate — but did not incur anyone's lasting enmity. "Anything, he is seen as being too close to the Americans."

"There were some tensions with Madeleine but I don't remember anyone saying a bad word about him," one official said. "He's always been respected for his professional ability. He's a bureaucrat and very diplomatic too, not at all confrontational." He impressed many by maintaining a discreet silence about his prospects while Mr Boutros-Ghali was still in the running for a second term.

Malcolm Rifkind, the Foreign Secretary, had a long chat with Mr Annan in September, and Britain believes his credentials speak for themselves. But some question his managerial and budgetary expertise. "He was one of the top management guys during the worst days of UN back-passing and inefficiency," a UN bureaucrat pointed out. "Others wonder whether the likeable Ghanaian is tough enough for the job."



Frontrunner: But France may block Kofi Annan

Watch the birdie and collect another point

Competitive bird-watching is all the rage in South Africa, reports Donald McNeil

IT'S 3.30am. In the thick fog, four men have a tree surrounded and are holding tape recorders up and one sending a different hoot up into the branches, hoping for a reply. A cold drizzle runs down their necks. "We do this for fun," said Bob McCosh, aged 62.

These are men who can charge into a forest and shout "Red-chested cuckoo! Yellow-bellied bulbul! Golden-rumped tinker barbet! Purple-banded sunbird! Orange-breasted bush shrike!" They are birders, taking part in competitive birding, a practice once a year in South Africa on national Birding Big Day in late November.

Birding is big in South Africa. There are more than 900 bird species in southern Africa compared with about 650 in North America, and they range from the huge and ugly, such as marabou storks and ostriches, to the majestic, such as fish eagles and Goshawk herons.

Mr Holtschhausen, publications director for BirdLife South Africa and a member of the team, says they can become almost obsessed. "There's this hide and Mike Ford, aged 54, another member. "And all these tourists were watching this huge rhino rolling in the mud. And then the four of us stomp in, saying, 'Hey, look at that rhino! Yellow-billed oxpecker on it!'"

The team rose at 3.15am on

Birding Big Day, having slept only 20 yards from their first target, the owl tree. By 8am, driving at breakfast speed, they have already visited a hilltop camarguan, a rhyolite backyard, mountain forest, grassy fields, a riverside cliff, a sand forest, a crocodile-infested swamp and the town of Hluhluwe.

By 9am, they have counted 130 species, more than half the 254 they counted in 24 hours last year, but they are in despair. "We're about 20 species adrift," Mr Holtschhausen lamented. "This wind is killing us."

When they leave the protected areas, it becomes clear why BirdLife South Africa is becoming far more aggressive about environmentalism. The 150 miles of coastline between here and Durban, which used to be native forest, is now nearly solid "green desert" — sugar cane fields and eucalyptus tree farms. The team has been birding competitively for 10 years, and many of its best spots are gone.

Mr Holtschhausen is trying to persuade large companies to set aside land for birding, telling them they can make money doing it. American birders spend \$18 billion a year pursuing their hobby.

By 10pm, with a light rain falling, the team packs it in. The winner won't be known for three weeks.

"Seriously," Mr McCosh said, "we're hoping everyone else had rotten weather, too." — New York Times.

Colony adopts China's man for the top job

Andrew Higgins reports from Hong Kong on the selection of Tung Chee-hwa as leader-in-waiting

WRATHED in Communist Party pagentry and Christmas lights, a shipping tycoon who cheers for Confucian values and Liverpool FC was yesterday anointed to rule Hong Kong when the British territory reverts to China after 155 years of colonial rule.

A 400-member committee handpicked by Beijing and stacked with businessmen voted overwhelmingly as expected for Tung Chee-hwa, aged 53, to replace Britain's 28th and last governor, Chris Patten, at midnight on June 30 next year. He got 320 votes.

A small group of protesters erected a cardboard "tomb of democracy" outside the Hong Kong Convention Centre as a protest against what banners denoted as a "phony election". Police released them three hours later — after the Chinese foreign minister, Qian Qichen, and the selection committee had left. Ms Lau was allowed to give radio interviews throughout on a mobile phone.

The selection of Mr Tung is likely to drain away the last of Britain's waning authority. China will name a "provisional" legislature to replace

Hong Kong's elected assembly this month.

Mr Patten yesterday offered to co-operate with Mr Tung, but said: "We are both, of course, agreed that I am responsible for the administration of Hong Kong until June 30 next year and after that he is responsible."

Mr Tung was born into a wealthy family in Shanghai and fled to Hong Kong ahead of the 1949 Communist revolution. He studied in Bournemouth and at Liverpool University, where he acquired a taste for football.

"For the past 100 years Hong Kong has been a colony," he said yesterday before leaving for a meeting in China. "Now we are in charge of ourselves. I believe most Hong Kong people have confidence in the future."

All British governors have been appointed in London. His nearest rival was the former chief justice, Yang Hsi-ling, who gave up his title as judge and a large house to compete. He got 42 votes. In third place was businessman Peter Woo with 36.

The ballot for Mr Tung took place before a vast red curtain hung with the seal of the People's Republic of China, decor evocative of the Great Hall of the People in Beijing, although Christmas wreaths strung with fairy lights relieved the solemnity.

The gathering was conducted in Mandarin incomprehensible to most Hong Kong residents. Only the names of the three candidates were read out in both Mandarin and Cantonese, the local dialect. Applause rippled across the hall on cue.

"When Hong Kong people see this on television they think they are in Beijing," said a pro-democracy legislator, Young Sum.

China's foreign minister called the occasion an "exhilarating moment" symbolic of an "entirely new era." "You are writing the history of Hong Kong," he said.

Many people voiced apathy

over a choice expected since the Chinese president, Jiang Zemin, effectively endorsed Mr Tung as Beijing's choice with a much-photographed handshake in January.

"If you want to call this democracy it is democracy with Chinese characteristics," said Martin Lee, the leader of Hong Kong's biggest political group, the Democratic Party. "I've always called this the C. H. Tung selection committee. His victory is no surprise to anyone. We hope that he can prove himself to be better than the electoral system that produced him." He said Mr Tung should be given a "honeymoon on probation".

Many pro-democracy activists fear that Mr Tung, whose shipping empire was bailed out by Beijing in 1988, will not stand up to China to defend the territory's freedoms.

Supporters applaud his intimacy with Beijing. "I am pro-China, he is pro-China. Hong Kong is part of China so why shouldn't we be pro-China," said David Chu, a fellow Shanghai-born businessman.

"Hong Kong and China don't have any inherent conflict of interest. What is good for Hong Kong is good for China. What is good for China is good for Hong Kong."

Henry Young, the general manager of Cathay Pacific, Henry Young, who was present at yesterday's gathering, dismissed complaints that the result was rigged. "It is like going to races. You have hot favourites and others who might win against the odds. There is nothing wrong with this. You only suspect rigging if the hot favourite does not win."

Ian Black adds: The Government said in a statement that the Prime Minister and Foreign Secretary sent messages of congratulation to Mr Tung, "for whom there is great respect." "British ministers have every confidence that he will be a worthy first chief executive."

Leader comment, page 8

Blow for Jewish lobby

Martin Walker in Washington

THE LEADING arm of the pro-Israel lobby in the United States has suffered a sharp legal setback, required by an appeal court ruling to disclose the sources of its funds and how the money is spent.

The blow comes just as the Arab press has launched a strident campaign against the new secretary of state, Madeleine Albright, as a frustrated Jewish old maid who was promised a husband by President Clinton if she succeeds in toppling Boutros Boutros-Ghali as secretary-general of the United Nations.

Ms Albright — initially amused by Arab press por-

trays of her as "that horrible macarena-dancing woman" and as the reincarnation of the former Israeli premier, Golda Meir — now fears the caricature could warp US policy in the Middle East.

The farcical Arab press attacks on Ms Albright point to a deep uncertainty about US policy towards Israel and the Middle East peace process, which afflicts Israelis and Arabs alike. The new administration has said it will continue to support the peace process, but appears less ready to woo Syria than the departed Warren Christopher.

The Likud-led Israeli government, noting that Ms Albright supported Israel at the UN, is worried instead by the new national security ad-

viser, Sandy Berger. He was close to the Peace Now movement in Israel in the 1980s and has criticised Israel's response to the intifada.

It is also disturbed at the ruling last Friday of the US Court of Appeals that Israel's prime lobbying arm, the American-Israeli Public Affairs Committee (Aipac), is a political action committee, and required to abide by the Federal Election Commission rules on fundraising.

These rules would oblige Aipac to reveal its fundraising sources and to publish full accounts of how those funds are spent.

The case against Aipac was brought by American critics of its influence on US foreign policy. The committee is considering an appeal.



LEPROSY patients offer prayers for Mother Teresa at a home run by her Missionaries of Charity religious order in Titagarh, outside Calcutta. PHOTOGRAPH: JAYANTA SHAH

Bolger sells policies to stay in power

Giles Wilson in Wellington

THE FULL cost of the New Zealand National Party's deal to stay in power has become clear: a \$2.2 billion increase in public spending over the next three years and the sacrifice of many of its election platform policies.

The nationalist New Zealand First party will also get up to 40 per cent of the seats in Jim Bolger's cabinet as its reward for forming a coalition with the National Party — from which its Maori leader Winston Peters broke away three years ago rather than backing Labour.

The coalition will lift the limit on compensation for Maori land claims, a move which Mr Peters believes will help him sell the deal to his Maori supporters, who have traditionally voted Labour.

The minimum wage will be raised by 10 per cent, and student grants will be at the same level as the dole. The inflation target is to be lifted by 1 per cent. Many of National's market-driven health service reforms are to be reversed, particularly its aim for hospitals to make a profit.

It is an astonishing reconciliation between Mr Bolger and Mr Peters. In August, Mr

Peters said Mr Bolger was not fit for office. And when Mr Bolger sacked him from his cabinet in 1993 he said Mr Peters was lazy, did not read his papers, and slept in meetings.

The Labour leader Helen Clark, who would have become New Zealand's first woman prime minister if she had outnegotiated Mr Bolger in the two months of coalition talks, said: "We have never sought power at any price, and that has distinguished us from the National Party."

She vowed to work to bring down the coalition, starting with a no-confidence motion tomorrow.

Mr Peters, who becomes deputy prime minister and treasurer in the new cabinet, was not offered such a senior position by Labour.

A member of the pensioners' pressure group Greypower, which backed Mr Peters at the election, said: "We introduced him as one of the few honest politicians in New Zealand, and he has betrayed us. He made us look stupid."

Unicef calls for quick end to dangerous child labour

Victoria Brittain

UNICEF is calling for an immediate end to dangerous and exploitative child labour in a report issued on the organisation's 50th birthday.

The United Nations Children's Fund estimates there are 250 million children working in and in industrial jobs which threaten their lives.

In Sivakasi in India, for instance, Unicef found a

matchstick-making factory. "Dust from the chemical powders and strong vapours in both the storeroom and the boiler room were obvious... 250 children, mostly below 10, were working in a long hall with filling in a slotted frame with sticks. Some were barely five years old."

Other forms of child labour are so grave an abuse of human rights that the world must come to regard them in the way it does slavery, as unjustifiable under any circumstances, the report

says. But, as it points out, ending all child labour will be a long and complicated business and some of the remedies proposed by Westerners have been counter-productive. The 1992 Harbin Bill introduced in the US Congress aiming to prohibit the import of products made by children under 15 is a case in point.

Although the bill never reached the statute books, the threat of it caused panic in the clothes industry in Bangladesh and dozens of child workers were dismissed. The

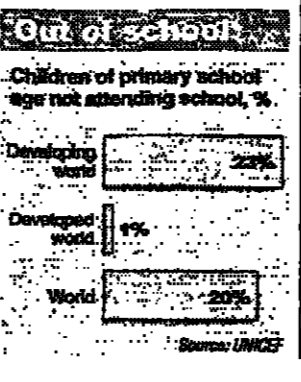
children, mostly girls, were traced and found to have moved on to more dangerous and exploitative workshops, or to have become prostitutes.

The report emphasises that child labour is mainly a product of poverty and many surveys have shown that children's work is often essential to keeping the family just self-sufficient.

But the report draws a sharp distinction between dangerous work and more traditional labour, such as on family farms. New areas of

child labour of the most exploitative kind have recently opened up in eastern Europe as living standards have plummeted, while in the United States, immigrant and ethnic minority children have been found working in fields wet with pesticides.

Unicef's priority is to press governments to provide free and compulsory education and to urge donors to tackle the economic pressures which have forced developing countries to cut education budgets.



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The young dissembler

Yet Mr Willetts will still not accept he was wrong

WAS the parliamentary bottle half full, or half empty? MPs, high on unadulterated self-congratulation, allowed themselves few doubts yesterday. David Willetts had done the right thing, and departed. The revamped Privileges Committee had done the right thing, set aside base politicking, and reached lofty consensus. The verdict had been ferociously firm, but fair. Score one for the system. Let Westminster self-regulation flower unashamed. Let public trust blossom anew.

Well, up to a point, Lord Nolan. Too much euphoria spoils the broth. The committee in general, and the dogged Quentin Davies in particular, surpassed expectations. They conclude in terms that the Paymaster-General tossed them a load of old rope. ("Dissembling" is a nice fifteenth century word for it as in "I have want of your dissembling, sirrah"). He thus "substantially aggravated" the grievance. Mr Willetts, for all his vaunted cleverness, spun them a stupid yarn. He was wrong, as a Whip two years ago, to meddle with the Select Committee on Members' Interests. Neil Hamilton's frolics at the Paris Ritz were none of his business. But his own testimony made it much, much worse. In future — quite the most damning thing — the Committee will want to hear similar evidence under oath.

All this is very good news (and possibly very disconcerting news for Mr Andrew Mitchell, the Whip who was actually on the Members' Interests Committee and whose bizarre interventions are next in line for investigation). But no-one, least of all MPs themselves, should get carried away. Mr Willetts's memo is just the antipasto to a long, soiled menu. That scribbled note to the Chief Whip, clearly signalling efforts to pollute a serious inquiry, only came to light because of The Guardian's discovery demands in the (collapsed) Hamil-

ton court case. The Whips Office saw nothing wrong for years. They would try and fix anything. They doubtless thought it all fair game.

Yesterday's report merely talks of "impropriety" here. Sir Geoffrey Johnson Smith, once the supreme arbiter of such propriety, escapes with a grey little wigging. He's forgetfully "somewhat confused" over Willetts' advice that he use his committee's in-built Conservative majority — or the cloak of sub-judice — to bury Mr Hamilton's inconvenient behaviour. But that is, in fact, what happened. If Quentin Davies hadn't got the bit between his teeth, if David Willetts had contritely pleaded mere juvenile enthusiasm, there might have been scant ferocity on offer.

That is not reassuring. Nor, yesterday, was much of the second phase comment. Mr Willetts did not resign, he claimed, because he had done anything wrong. To the contrary, he had told the "truth". The Committee might be righteous in its wrath over his dissembling, but it was — by inference — up a gumtree. Foolish defiance. Why quit at all in such circumstances? The Unpaid-master-General would have us believe that he has withdrawn as a matter of political practicality and, pavilioned in comradely sympathy, will one day get his Daimler back. The aura of game-playing lingers.

But these affairs — the boodle, the lobbying, the pollution of supposed justice — are not games played in some cosy, understanding club. As Nolan brusquely underlined, they define the health of our democracy in trust or cynicism. That is serious business. In the spotlight, the Committee has done well. One minister (Tony Newton) has damned another; a rising, of necessity, to the occasion. There are, though, rather too many occasions pending where exactly that resolution, and that spotlight, will be needed.

Clarke's fine but futile line

The Europe debate showed the Tories at their worst

BRUSHING aside the pressures against him from his own party, Kenneth Clarke yesterday delivered a lucid and coherent defence of the Government's hard-won policy of wait-and-see over the single European currency. Politically, yesterday was a daunting occasion for the Chancellor. His speech opening the two-day debate on Europe went down like the proverbial lead balloon. He was hardly on his feet before the first of his backbench critics was trying to wound him. For the following three quarters of an hour there was little let-up. Sometimes these parliamentary occasions fail to fulfil all the advance build-up. This one, though, was the exception. There can rarely have been a more dramatic example in our political history of a chancellor of the exchequer at bay. Yet in these shoddy and remarkable times, none of it is likely to have any effect.

As an advertisement for the Conservative Party, it was appalling. Yet as an exposition of a logical and supportable position on the complex and hugely important question of the single currency, it was admirable. In practice, Mr Clarke speaks for the majority of MPs in Parliament. Not even the Liberal Democrats seriously argue any longer against Britain's single currency opt-out. Instead, most MPs accept the fundamental propositions which Mr Clarke laid before them yet again yesterday. First, he is right that a single currency is in principle a desirable thing for Britain in Europe because of

its effect on exchange rate instability, transaction costs, interest rates and — this is a more recent discovery — because of its disciplinary effect on the public finances of other European nations. Second, he is right that a single currency must work as well as possible, whether or not Britain decides to join it, because a European single currency will profoundly affect our economic and monetary circumstances, whatever our relationship to it. And third, he is right that Britain must take an active and positive part in the negotiations which lead up to any decision because to do otherwise is to renounce control over our own affairs.

Ostensibly, this is why this week's Commons debate is taking place. Today in Dublin, the European finance ministers meet to try to reach agreement on the details of the pre-single currency package. These ministers need to make sure that the so-called stability pact for nations joining the single currency is neither too loose nor too strict. It must not be too loose because such a pact would make a mockery of the need for genuine economic convergence of the nations entering it. But it must also not be too tight, because the idea of the Union imposing huge and unpayable fines on errant member states is equally unacceptable. Both errors would cause calamitous stresses and strains within the structures of the single currency. It is in all our interests that the finance ministers, Mr Clarke among them, get it right in Dublin tonight.

A Hong Kong honeymoon

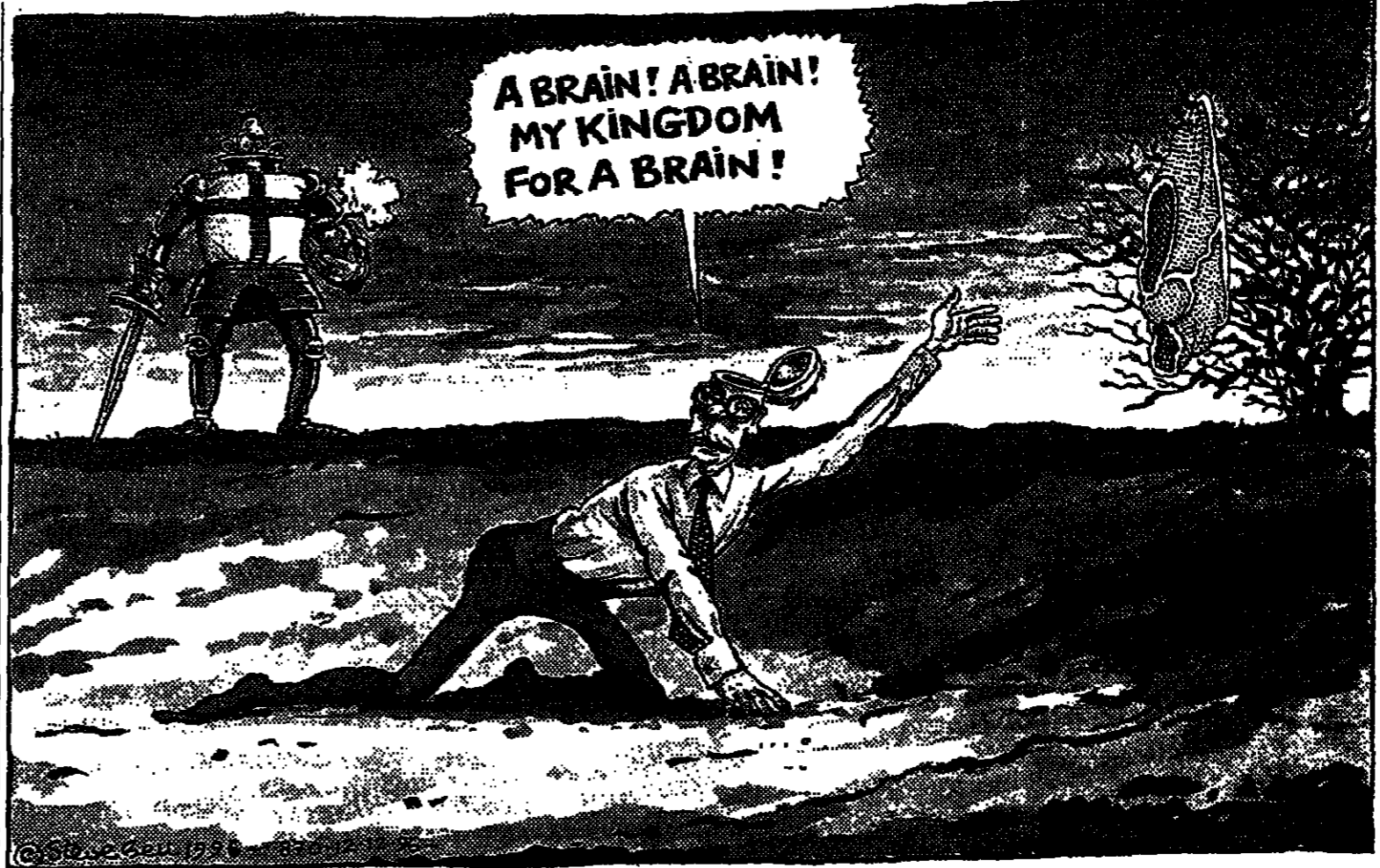
But not everyone gives Mr Tung the benefit of the doubt

HONG KONG has acquired the Chief Executive whom it expected rather than deserved. Patriotic and wealthy, strong but supple, the shipping magnate Tung Chee-hwa fits Beijing's profile ideally for the post-handover job. He would not have been Hong Kong's choice, but someone else was choosing. Given the limitations, Mr Tung is still the most popular of the available candidates. He is, so to speak, the best Chief Executive that Hong Kong has got.

Yesterday almost everyone was looking on the bright side. British ministers had "every confidence" that he would be a worthy successor to Mr Patten. Of course they would — especially since Mr Patten picked Mr Tung back in 1992 to add a pro-China voice to his own Executive Council. Taiwan sent congratulations. Mr Tung has family connections there, and Taipei hopes that he (and Beijing) will understand the need for restraint if Hong Kong is to be seen

as a positive model. Hong Kong civil servants suggest Mr Tung is a man of compromise. The first test will be whether he can work with Anson Chan, the current Chief Secretary, who has defended Mr Patten's political reforms. Even Martin Lee, leader of the Hong Kong democrats, has offered Mr Tung a "honeymoon on probation" and asked to meet him. Mr Tung's smartest move would be to respond positively. Both he and Beijing are committed to a "smooth transition", but that means living with the political ambiguities it requires. The burden for failure has shifted from British to Chinese shoulders.

Not everyone is giving Mr Tung the benefit of the doubt. The campaigning legislative councillor Emily Lau, who lay down in the street yesterday, says that Mr Tung will carry out Beijing's orders ruthlessly. Such protests are also an essential part of the pressure to ensure that he does not actually do so.



Letters to the Editor

The meaning of the red ribbon

SIMON Hoggart (The Week, December 7) asks why people wear Red Ribbons for World Aids Day. The reasons are as varied as the ribbons themselves. The red ribbon can represent the remembrance of a lover, friend or family member lost to Aids. It can symbolise support for initiatives to prevent HIV infection. Most of all, it can say to someone living with HIV or Aids that there is support and understanding for an illness that still engenders prejudice and discrimination.

Mr Hoggart also asks "and why only Aids?" in the mistaken belief that Aids has a monopoly on awareness ribbons, when they have become popular for a variety of other issues including breast cancer (the pink ribbon) and the Irish peace process (white).

He then states flatly that meningitis is far more worrying to parents than HIV. In our experience, any infectious life-threatening condition tends to be of importance to parents. The fact that there are clear ways to prevent HIV infection should come as a relief to parents and Mr Hoggart alike. Seeing the red ribbon as a possibility, malevolent people to ask questions.

Mr Hoggart is fortunate not to know anyone who has died of Aids, as that is not the case for many people both in this country and across the globe where 22 million people are now living with HIV. Derek Beadell, Director, National Aids Trust, Mike Camppling, Director, Red Ribbon International, 188-196 Old Street, London EC1V 9FR.

Equal rites

GENDER, and race, quotas do have a place (Letters, December 11). Unfortunately their use has been undervalued. They do work, and provide a very useful mechanism for quick redress of the present huge imbalances. The main reason they are not used more is that, as soon as female or black lower be-comes a possibility, male/white members of society prevent further progress. Quotas have never been given a chance to work.

Equal opportunities, while given lip service, do not exist in the UK. Job Carr's letter is a good example of muddled thinking on this issue. He is right in saying that the use, and effectiveness, of quotas is exaggerated, and that society needs to change before equality can become a reality. But he is wrong in dismissing quotas. Bringing more practical power to female and black members of society would in itself change that society.

Let's follow the Labour Party's example: introduce quotas for women — and refuse to allow men to frustrate their operating. Then let's do the same for black people. Susan Gibb, 94 Bampton Street, Tiverton, Devon EX16 6AL.

Blood money

AS A blood donor, I do not agree with your correspondent's (December 10) suggestion that charges for the supply of blood to private hospitals be increased by a factor of five. I have been credited with 199 platelet donations; no one should make a financial gain from this gift. The only charges should be those of collection, storage and handling. Selling blood will make pimps of the Transfusion Service and prostitute the donors. Drew Smith, 76 Campbell Road, Oxford OX4 3PG.

Lords, hear our prayers

THE electorate should not take lectures on representative democracy from Lord Cranborne (Save the gift amateurs, December 8, Letters, December 6). It is not generally appreciated that OPOV (One Person One Vote) is quite young in the UK, introduced only in 1949 when business and university votes were abolished.

When Lord Cranborne sat, briefly, as a Member of the Commons for the family constituency, he introduced in 1983 a Private Member's Bill entitled the House of Commons (University Constituencies) (Election and Rights of Members) Bill. This idea was 12 extra MPs elected by graduates of universities irrespective of where they happened to live, in addition to using their constituency votes.

The man who seeks to lecture Labour on the usefulness of hereditary powers in a mature democracy did, when a Member of the elected chamber, seek to introduce the principle of SPTV (Some People Two Votes). And this man is in John Major's Cabinet. Jeff Rooker MP, House of Commons, London SW1A 0AA.

THERE is no need to create 700 new peers for a Labour government to get its constitutional reforms through the Lords (Grimm and cordite, The Week, December 7). The Parliament Acts 1911 and 1949 provide a much simpler and neater solution. All a new government need do is reintroduce the same legislation in the following session and, if the Lords block it again, they can be bypassed and the Bill submitted directly for Royal Assent. Robert Hazell, Director, The Constitution Unit, 4 Tavistock Place, London WC0H 9RA.

LORD Cranborne thinks that hereditary peers should continue to sit in the Lords because they are "amateur" politicians, "representing the common man" and "chosen by lot". May I suggest that if we really want such a body they could be selected in the same way as juries from among the population as a whole. Not only would these people be amateur politicians and uninterested in patronage, they would genuinely represent the people of the

country not only in viewpoint but also in composition of gender, sexuality, race, ethnicity etc. Somehow I doubt Lord Cranborne's altruism. Edward Richards, 22 Churchill Avenue, Manchester M18 8JU.

LORD Irvine has other opinions beyond "flooding" the House of Lords with new peers in order to get reform through. The key move would be to create some new hereditary peers, if necessary ones with no children or only daughters so that they are *de facto* life peers. One thing held dear by the hereditary peers is their status and rank within the system; thus by turning a few committed supporters of no great political or personal significance into dukes, one would strike at the very core of the peerage, by devaluing the status of the higher peers, creating an imbalance in the hierarchy and destabilising the structure.

The mere threat may be enough, as in 1911. Matthew Seward, Flat 54, Clifford Court, 24/25 Kensington Gdns Square, London W2 4BE.

Pensions: the war rages on

IF THE Government had succeeded in quietly slipping through its changes to war pensions ('Shabby and mean-minded', December 6), it would not just have been the veterans who would have suffered. As the complaints started, the staff of the War Pensions Agency would be on the receiving end, not ministers.

As the so-called "administrative" changes took hold and the complaints clamour grew, it would probably be the Chief Executive of the WPA who would carry the can — just as Derek Lewis (Prisons) and Ros Hepplewhite (Child Support) have already done. Ministers would again dive for cover behind the shelter of "operational" problems. (Prof) Colin Talbot, University of Glamorgan, Pontypridd, Wales CF37 1DL.

IN explaining the withdrawal of £50 million from war pensions, the Prime Minister proclaimed to the House that this could be justified because "... we always listen to the experts and act accordingly".

This is an attempt to raise a smokescreen around the proliferation of ageist policies on the political agenda. During the past few weeks the Government has openly proposed the inclusion of age discrimination among the topics to be discussed at the European Inter-Governmental Conference. It has done this against a background of growing enlightenment on the subject throughout Europe. Don W Steele, Executive Director, Association of Retired Persons, Greenoak House, Francis Street, London SW1P 1DZ.

MY FATHER joined the Army in 1915 and was invalided out in May 1918 to Dover Hospital. He was very ill, his lungs were damaged, possibly by gas, and he had a head wound.

He went to the medical tribunal several times and finally he was defined as not bad enough for a war pension. The only way he could obtain relief from pain was to inhale the steam from a bowl of hot water with several large opium poppies floating in it. He died in 1932 as a result of his war wounds, still unable to obtain any war relief. Name and address supplied.

We do not publish letters where only an e-mail address is supplied; please include a full postal address. We may edit letters; shorter ones are more likely to appear.



Come back Marvel Crumppacker

FOR further bizarre surnames (Letters, December 7, 9), see John Forster's *Life of Dickens* (book 9, section 7). It studies a notebook which Dickens kept in later life that listed surnames, and personal names, for possible use in fiction. Most of the personal names and some surnames were drawn from "Privy Council Education Letters". The personal names included Balzina, Samillas, Orange, Feather and Pleasant; the surnames, Ghost, Ladla, Why, Fotherly and Scrubbam. Any other very long list, origin un- stated, included Chinkerbila, Brownsword and Tricklebank; I myself saw the last of these, with Pauffley, Satterlee, Soothern and Trembath, in newspaper articles on September 20 and 21, 1994.

Gotobed is a genuine surname, listed in surname dictionaries and to be found in the Fens and Norfolk. When I first went to live in Chester in 1967, a locksmith had W Godbehere over his shop. J A P Dutton, 39 Victoria Road, Ellesmere Port, Cheshire L65 8BU.

WHEN I was studying psychology as a (very) naive student, I started collecting a list of wonderful names. My list didn't get very long before I realised that the incidence of wonderful names among psychologists (very many American) is obviously high, and there is no point in recording them — just open any reputable learned journal. My list: Sheri Turteltaub, Marceline R Fusilier, Surname Etymon-Trotman and J G Basse-Centra. J J W Atkinson, 548 Yaren Road, Eaglescliffe, Stockton on Tees TS16 0BX.

Labour under heavy surveillance

IT is somewhat disingenuous of Jack Straw (Letters, November 30) to cite what the security service said during the passage of last session's Security Service Bill to support the party's stance on the intrusive surveillance provisions in the current Police Bill, when one considers the line the Labour Party took last time round. The Security Service Bill (now Act) gave the Security Service power to enter and interfere with property in serious crime cases. Before doing so the Security Service needs a warrant signed by a Secretary of State. At Report Stage in the House of Lords (June 27 1996, Hansard col 1,039), Lord McIntosh, the Labour front-bench spokesman, moved an amendment which would have required such warrants to be authorised by a high-court judge. Lord McIntosh argued that operations as intrusive as these should be judicially authorised, and forced the matter to a vote (where the

amendment was defeated). Perhaps Mr Straw can now explain why, six months ago, a system of ministerial authorisation, which at least provides an element of independent scrutiny prior to the authorisation of intrusive operations, was thought to offer inadequate protection of liberty, yet now a system whereby the police authorise their own break-ins is acceptable. Alan Wilkinson, 28 Aldred Road, London NW6 4RN.

GERALD Kaufman (Letters, December 11) decries his appeal for loyalty to the Labour Party leadership by denouncing Tribune as "unreadable and irrelevant". Recent contributors have included Gordon Brown, Robin Cook, Jack Straw, David Blunkett, Margaret Beckett, Alistair Campbell and Tony Blair. That's loyalty for you. David Ross, 55 Ruskin Park House, London SE25 8TQ.

It's academic

NO MONEY has been removed from the Royal Academy pension scheme (Academy gripped by £2m debt crisis, December 7). As a result of the non-existence of an automatic procedure for transferring the Academy's contribution to the scheme, payments totalling £200,000 due to the scheme were not made. This will be rectified. This is an administrative error and it does not affect payment of existing pensions, nor will it affect transfer values for those members of the scheme leaving and wishing to join another scheme.

The fact that the scheme itself is in deficit has been known from the day it was set up. It was always due to make up the deficit over a period of years. Whilst we are currently experiencing some financial difficulties, your report failed to state what the Royal Academy has achieved without the benefit of public funding. With nearly one million visitors each year, it has shown some of the most significant exhibitions seen in London over recent years. David Gordon, Secretary, Royal Academy of Arts, Burlington House, Piccadilly, London W1V 0DS.

A Country Diary

WEARDALE: It was a case that had puzzled me for years. An ordinary riverbank woodland, with a mixture of birch, alder, sycamore and old poplars — and something had it in for the poplars. There were four down already, each with their trunks snapped about five feet above soil level. The corpses were too far gone to be able to identify cause of death, half-submerged in alluvial soil, leaf mould and velvety moss. Scales of biscuit-coloured *Stereum fungus* lined their shaded under-surfaces, but this is a scavenger killer of live trees. No, there had to be something deadlier at work. Then came the recent gales. Another poplar down. The same modus operandi; trunk snapped like a twig. Amongst the broken branches a clammy dome had erupted through the bark. Further down there were more, each larger and tougher than the last. Then,

where the main branches met the trunk, the killer revealed itself — *Fomes fomentarius*, the hoof fungus — with a mature fruiting body that was the size and shape of a horse's hoof, complete with horny outer covering. *Fomes* had been digesting the trunk heartwood for years, until it lost the struggle to support the swaying crown. A graveyard of poplars, a bonanza for woodpeckers hunting for over-wintering invertebrates under flaking bark and spongy, desiccated wood softened by successive waves of fungal opportunists. Every fallen tree was pitted with excavations. The latest victim had a pool of fresh yellow wood chippings below a peak wound in the bark. A familiar call made me glance up, just in time to catch sight of a flash of scarlet and black against the clear blue winter sky. The chief beneficiary of this windfall was waiting for me to get out of the way. PHIL GATES

Diary

Matthew Norman

WHILE many of his colleagues find themselves caught up in the ideological struggle over Europe, that old brain-box Harry Greenwood, Tory MP for Ealing, refuses to be sidetracked by trivia. Harry is no stranger to tackling major issues, and once laid an Early Day Motion congratulating the Queen Mother on her birthday. However, in his latest view as his most significant contribution since calling for a legal definition of the horse in 1991, he has turned his mind to Christmas trees. Harry has challenged a Treasury store in Farnham, west London, over its failure to erect a giant tree. Refusing to accept the explanation that the firm cannot spare the requisite £5,000, Harry ominously tells the Greenford Gazetteer that he is "prepared to go right to the top" over this. So soon after Sir John Gorton withdrew cooperation over a hospital emergency unit, the implication is clear. John Major says he will not be held to ransom. Perhaps we are about to find out.

CHRISTMAS card arrives from Harold Brooks-Baker, publisher of Brock's Footings. Perhaps because the book is not actually published, Harold has turned his skills to flogging a series of genealogical books tailored for people with a particular surname. An enterprise that came to our attention when this world expert on titles wrote to one potential client, a Liberal life peer, addressing him as Mr Tordoff. It is reassuring, then, to note from the card that he has recovered his old accuracy. "To Martin Norman," says the inscription, "from Harold Brooks-Baker." He got his own name right, and one out of two isn't bad. Happy Christmas, Harold!

Shock zoological news from California, a herpetologist has been called in to tape the voice of Henry Kissinger after the former US Secretary of State made a group of female frogs go berserk at a country club. After analysing the tape, reports the Fortean Times, the expert concluded that his voice is identical to the sound of a male frog in heat. The girl frogs are furious with Dr Kissinger for getting them excited on false pretences; but relieved at the same time that he didn't have them napalmed.

Those who criticise my friend Jack Cunningham for alleged intolerance I have important evidence that no one works harder than the Labour heritage spokesman. Indeed, Jack has been telling people that, since the Millennium Commission will have to change its name after 1999 (if you see Olga Matiland wandering around looking puzzled, explain it to her, would you?), Labour has been thinking hard about what to call the body that will dole out the Lottery money. In the year 2000, the name will change to... wait for it, please... the "New Millennium Commission". It's so clever, it's almost frightening.

TODAY'S Christmas message comes from onetime Guardian journalist Sir Bernard Ingham. "I am all in favour of spreading goodwill, and I hope that people understand there is a season of goodwill all year round," says Bernie, ex-hausting his optimism. "Unfortunately I don't think that's the case so I don't really see anything changing." Wow. However bleak the message, this is the first time Bernie has used his powers to inspect the future for us. Buoyed by this, we ask him whether we may announce his appointment as Diary Astrologer. Alas not. "Well if THAT'S the case," splutters Bernie, in his best amateur dramatic Ebenezer Scrooge, "FORGET IT!"

ANTICIPATION grows in the world of publishing about one of the hottest titles on Penguin's list for early 1997. It's "Why Vote Conservative" (33.99) by David Winton. "It will be coming out as planned," says a Penguin press officer. "We don't see any reason not to publish it." Indeed not.



Annual Austin '96 out now. £4.99 inc p&p (Somers Publishing, Tresselt, Cardigan SA43 2JG. 01230 811 242)

Where there is secrecy there will always be leaks

Commentary

Richard Norton-Taylor

IT WAS a classic Heseltine performance. Questioned by MPs about allegations that he had asked civil servants to promote Tory policies, in breach of the code of conduct for ministers, he tried to turn the tables. He blamed the recent spate of Whitehall leaks — including the allegations about his own behaviour — on a network of politically motivated civil servants working for Labour.

It was a cavalier performance. Flanked by increasingly stony-faced civil servants, he told the Commons Public Service Committee on Tuesday night that, to prove it, he had a "folder of leaks". He had been looking through it that very morning, though when Giles Radice, the committee chairman, asked to see it, it could not be found. The folder, which has

yet to be passed to the committee, is believed to consist largely of press cuttings, including reports of a leaked Treasury paper on possible ways to cut the cost of the welfare state and the Guardian's recent exclusive about hidden Treasury plans to cut war pensions in — to use the word of the day (see page 1) an artful piece of dissembling.

The Treasury paper on long-term welfare costs had been drawn up by a unit including an official who had sought selection as a Labour candidate at Barnsley, but later withdrew. Ms Goodman was cleared of being the source of the leak.

Heseltine provided no evidence that recent leaks were motivated by Labour supporters in the Civil Service. Instead, with no hint of irony, he said a "leak culture" was becoming "endemic" and threatened to politicise the Civil Service, a charge usually laid at the door of government ministers. If ministers no longer trusted civil servants, he said, ministers would stop writing letters. And what about different policy options presented on paper to ministers? "Very few decisions that come to us are easy," he said. They often involved different degrees of misery, and the "the most

awful", as he put it, was leaked. While Heseltine berated the Commons committee, downstairs, on the floor of the Commons, Nicholas Soames, the armed-forces minister, was announcing a Ministry of Defence investigation into why civil servants and "military officials" had repeatedly supplied ministers with "flawed" information about the use of pesticides, a possible cause of Gulf-war syndrome. A handful of civil servants may be tempted to leak; most, as Sir Richard Scott's arms-to-Iraq inquiry so amply demonstrated, prefer the quiet life — to cover up, to hide behind the wall of official secrecy.

For ministers and officials alike the biggest sin is to be found out. Leaks are largely the result of excessive secrecy, of ministers, with the connivance of senior officials, misleading Parliament. Are we not living in a mature enough democracy for policy options to be discussed openly, to be considered rationally by MPs? "The government insists in secrecy for the inner workings of the government machine," asked Scott, "is it in a position to be surprised if criticism is ill-informed?"

As Heseltine was getting into his stride before the Public Service Committee, down below Soames was giving way to a debate on "open government". James Pawsley, a Tory backbencher, said it was time Britain joined other countries, including members of the Commonwealth, and introduced a Freedom of Information Act. "I am a convert because I want to see additional power placed in the hands of the ordinary citizen," he said. "Freedom of information results in better-in-

formed public debate," and gave "less opportunity for mistakes to be swept under ministerial carpets or under departmental carpets". Policy decisions would be better for having had a full and open debate, echoed the Tory MP, Richard Shepherd, citing as an example the sale of Ministry of Defence housing. "These are public mat-

ters," he said. "What is for sale and the conditions attached to it are a matter of public knowledge. For how else can you assure people that you have done it in an open, above-board way and achieved the best possible price?"

For Heseltine, who in earlier evidence to the committee referred to the "paraphernalia of so-called public accountability" as anathema, it would mean that ministers would never write anything down on paper but, instead, would "whisper in the corridors".

Heseltine seems to want government to be run like a business: UK plc. It would be so much easier

PR turns politics upside-down down under



Ian Aitken

ONE of the things which distinguishes us from the beasts is that when our personal interests are threatened we usually manage to think up lofty moral arguments in their defence. Thus the Viscount Cranborne recently claimed that hereditary aristocrats are actually more democratic than elected politicians because their disinterested amateur status protects them from the sordid pressures to which the professionals are subjected.

But before you laugh (with various Guardian letter-writers) at such self-serving nonsense, consider another aspect of the debate about our governance. Few arguments are more central to representative democracy than the endless dispute between supporters of proportional representation (PR) and defenders of first-past-the-post. It is presented as a moral issue, with reformers talking about fairness, and their adversaries pleading the case for strong and effective government.

Both arguments have substance, and are deployed with sincerity. But one can't help noticing how often the political advantage of the participants coincides with their case. They may not sound as dotty as Lord Cranborne, but their high-minded rhetoric is just as self-serving.

Thus the Liberals, and their LibDem successors, have supported what they call "fair voting" (ie PR) ever since they ceased to have any hope of forming a government on their own. Equally, the Labour Party discovered overwhelming reasons for backing first-past-the-post once they displaced the Liberals as the main challenger to the Tories. And the Tories have so far stuck to the status quo in the confident belief that they are the natural party of government — a confidence currently undermined by the threat of a split over Europe.

Now that it's a real possibility that two Tory parties will be fighting each other, a rethink of Conservative attitudes to PR seems quite likely. After all, the MPs who deserted Labour for the SDP instantly discovered hitherto unsuspected virtues in electoral reform. Moreover, when Labour shifted sharply to the left in the early 90s, several Tory grandees came out for PR as the only sure way to keep Tony Benn out of Downing Street. As for Labour itself, some MPs began to see a case for electoral reform when fashionable opinion

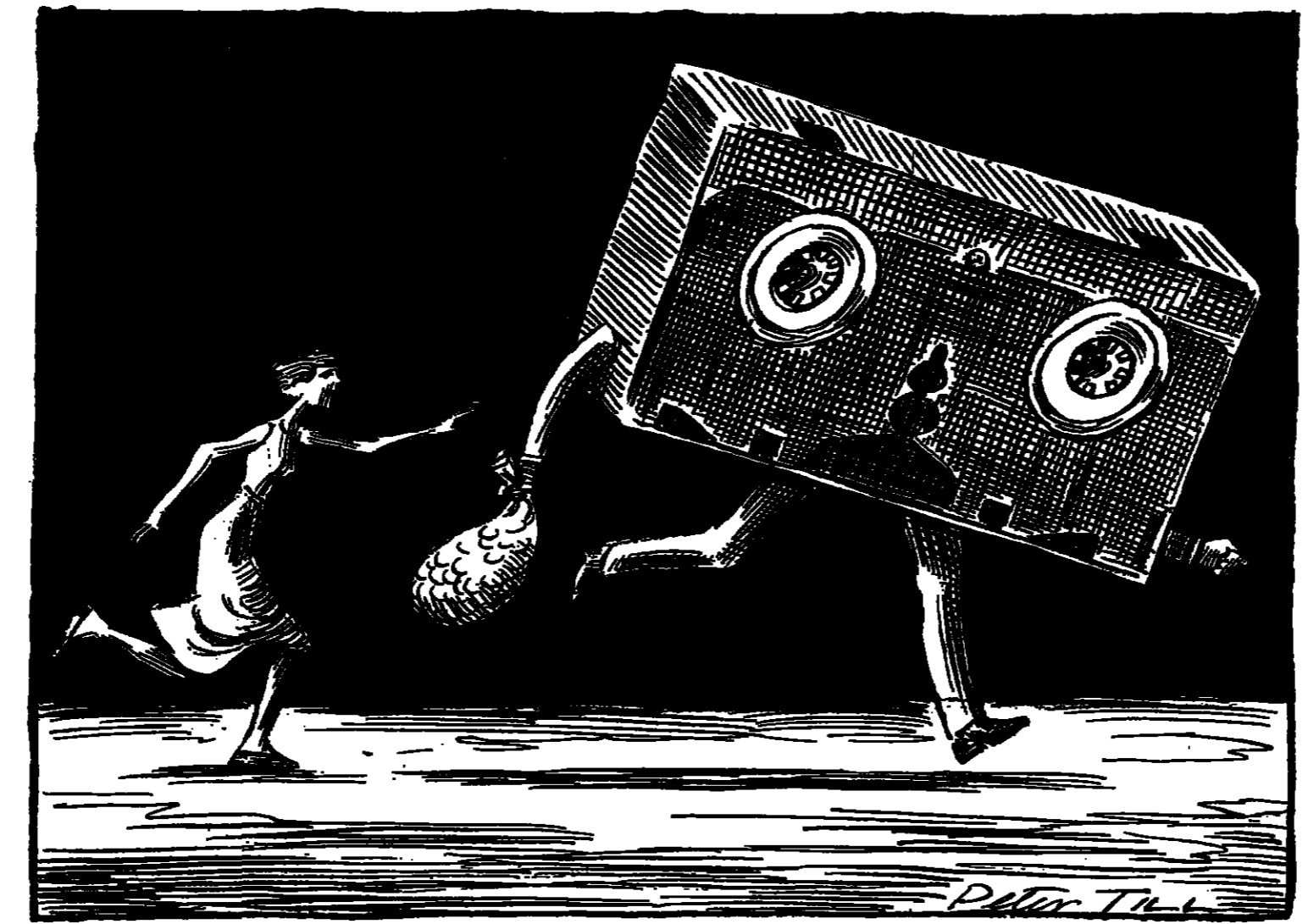
held that the existing system might never bring them a Commons majority again.

Taking all this at face value, you might expect that PR would have lost its appeal for Labour MPs now that they are again riding high in the polls. And to a certain extent this is the case. Tony Blair still refuses to give PR his personal endorsement, and some LibDems now fear that in the end he won't even honour John Smith's pledge of a PR referendum. Though reform hasn't been dropped, it's on the back burner again. But self-interest isn't always as crude as this. Some subtle Labour strategists now argue that, even if the party wins a resounding majority in May, a shift to PR may be wise if it seems to be the only way of preventing a Tory comeback at the election after next. So the pot, even if temporarily on the back burner, continues to simmer.

Or did, that is to say, until yesterday's intervention by the New Zealanders, whose politicians have suddenly joined our political establishment just as severely as their footballers joined our rugby establishment. You will remember — or perhaps you won't, since Kiwi politics doesn't get much coverage in Britain — that the New Zealanders had an election two months ago. For the first time, it was held under PR, and the National Party government headed by the highly unpopular Jim Bolger was clearly defeated, even if it was harder to decide who won.

Since then, New Zealand's politicians have spent eight weeks in backroom wheel-dealing in order to come up with a coalition government which can command a majority in parliament. And who is the head of this government? Why, Jim Bolger, the man the New Zealand electorate thought they had thrown out of office. His deputy premier will be the leader of a minor party which found him more ferociously than any other. If any voters get what they voted for, it will be pure coincidence. A system intended to end the cynicism about shabby politics has achieved the exact opposite — a betrayal. Back to the drawing board, lads.

It was nice watching Channel 4's programme about Lord Beaverbrook last Sunday, although I was puzzled by its "discovery" that he rethinks of Conservative attitudes to PR seems quite likely. After all, the MPs who deserted Labour for the SDP instantly discovered hitherto unsuspected virtues in electoral reform. Moreover, when Labour shifted sharply to the left in the early 90s, several Tory grandees came out for PR as the only sure way to keep Tony Benn out of Downing Street. As for Labour itself, some MPs began to see a case for electoral reform when fashionable opinion



Maureen Lipman thought Christmas had come: her agent told her she was eligible for back-pay for old TV plays now transferring to video. But then the plot thickened TV drama shock horror

ONLY 14 shopping lists to go to Christmas and, ho, ho, ho, yesterday the Ghost of Christmas Past popped up in the shape of a letter from my union, Equity. It was accompanied by a bewildered and apologetic Romeo from my agent virtually saying: "We're sinking, take what valuables you can."

Now, on the whole, actors are an unfortunate lot. Lot 13, if you like. "Daddy, when I'm grown up, I wanna be an actor," quotes writer Bernard Slade. "No, son," replied his father, "you can't be both." We remain 80 per cent out of work and, as television splinters into smaller and smaller employment units, and drama schools, drama degrees and media studies proliferate like cress on blotting paper, there is less balance in our lives than there is humility in Chris Evans's.

The way most actors subsidise three months at the Royal Exchange on £400 per week (to include subsistence) is via commercials and voice-overs if they're fortunate and ubiquitous, and through residuals if they're common or garden. Residuals are the percentage of your original fee you receive if the show you're in is repeated. For example, when I recently appeared in a repeat episode of The Lovers, first screened in 1970, I received £780 (less agent's commission of 27%).

has ruled that Britain must get in line with other European countries and pay back-licensing on any work done prior to 1994 which may now be issued in video form. Sounds good, doesn't it? Extra dripping in the Gerrick Club roasts in Act II of Hay Fever at the Everyman?

No, wait though, let's read the big print here in the form of the agent's letter: "Every claim for every piece of work must be lodged with the relevant producer by the December 31 1996" — otherwise the claimant shall forfeit his other rights to any residuals.

In other words, in between playing Dick Whittington's cat at Moushole, completing a Christmas epping Special with Jim Davidson at YTV, or after-dinner speaking to several hundred Kenwood-milner ser-vices-men at Grosvenor House — your average luvvie, sorry Trev, has 21 days to locate, write to and receive confirmation of receipt of letter from the 200 or 300 different producers who will have passed through his life in the previous 30-odd years. All of whom may now be living out their days as hairdressers in Hollywood, deck-quoters organisers on the Q&S, or resting their innards in those great Hollywood Boulevard footprints in the sky.

as to which TV company I should lodge my claim with. "Dear Sir, I am writing to notify you that I intend to exercise my right to equitable remuneration in respect of this film." I shall write to the late Thames TV. "I also require you to let me know, by return, if you have transferred the rental right in respect of the film and, if so, to whom." So here I am writing to a defunct TV station about a film they no longer own — and expecting them (whom?) to reply by return of post. Before December 31, 1996. Within 21 days. Some lawyers were saying yesterday that the period for which claims need to be made might not go back further than 1982;

merde has hit the fans. Everyone is blaming everyone else. I spoke to the aptly named Mr Ferrin, Ian Taylor's PR at the DTL, who assured me that although he wasn't the expert on this matter, he could assure me, assuredly, that Equity and the Personal Managers Association were cognisant of their deliberations. I translated this to mean the buck swapped here. At Equity, I was assured, equally equitably, that they had warned the Personal Managers Association last January, but could not move towards their members until legislation — the actual wording of how the rentals would be received — was set. I talked to my agent

who assured me that, yes, they were aware of the deadline but never for a moment assumed that the paperwork demanded by the legislation would be such that it would need an extended deadline of several fiscal years. "Let's face it," I intimated to Mr Taylor MP's PR, "what you are doing is following the letter of the law, as you are bound to do as a member of the European Union — but making damn sure that it is impossible for the law to be carried through in the appointed time."

If we got one sodding euro of it in the deadline provided, we'd go down on our laddered tights and recite haiku chants to St Maastricht. But he was not in the mood for my brand of irony

Christmas epping Special with Jim Davidson at YTV, or after-dinner speaking to several hundred Kenwood-milner services-men at Grosvenor House — your average luvvie, sorry Trev, has 21 days to locate, write to and receive confirmation of receipt of letter from the 200 or 300 different producers who will have passed through his life in the previous 30-odd years. All of whom may now be living out their days as hairdressers in Hollywood, deck-quoters organisers on the Q&S, or resting their innards in those great Hollywood Boulevard footprints in the sky.

Furthermore, I am puzzled

Maureen Lipman looks forward to receiving royalties from her new video, Live and Kidding (BMG Video, £12)

LOVE
There is NO in between
HATE
LAPHROAIG
no half measures.

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Finance Guardian

Levitt faces Companies Act charge

Don Atkinson

ROGER Levitt, the one-time superstar salesman whose life assurance empire collapsed in 1990, is being prosecuted for allegedly breaking a seven-year ban on his acting as a director, the Guardian has learned.

He is charged with being a "shadow director" wielding executive authority in a boxing-management company.

Mr Levitt is accused of effectively managing International Boxing Corporation, a company whose star property has been the world bantamweight champion, Alfred Kotey of Ghana.

His case will come before Marlborough Street magistrates on Monday. He faces a possible two-year jail term if found guilty.

The Department of Trade and Industry began proceedings against Mr Levitt on November 20.

He is charged with breaking Section 13 of the 1985 Company Directors Disqualification Act.

Mr Justice Laws disqualified Mr Levitt in November 1993 for acting as a director or being involved in the management of a company for a period of seven years.

The ban formed part of Mr Levitt's sentence after he pleaded guilty to a charge of fraudulent trading. The main part of the sentence, a 180-hour community service order, was criticised in some quarters as being too lenient.

'An ardent sports fan, he is expert in handling sportsmen and their finances'

The DTI alleges that Mr Levitt has broken the ban by being involved in running IBC. It has charged IBC director Michael Jacobs, a boxing manager and taxi driver, with aiding and abetting Mr Levitt in breaking the ban.

Three other directors and/or officers of IBC, Mark Segal, Cecil Halpin and John Wiffen, have been charged with providing explanations or statements regarding Mr Levitt's involvement under Section 447 of the Companies Act that they knew to be false.

Should the case be tried in a magistrates' court and Mr Levitt be found guilty, he would face a maximum six months in prison or £5,000 fine. The crown court maximum is two years' prison.

An ardent sports fan and naturally gregarious, he is an expert in the commercial handling of sportsmen and their finances.

At one point he is thought to have owned nearly 1 per cent of Arsenal football club, and backed world heavyweight boxing champion Lennox Lewis.

For the prosecution to succeed, it will not be enough to prove Mr Levitt has been in business or to show that he acted as a company agent. Only if the DTI can prove that he was a "shadow director" from whom other company officers were accustomed to receiving instructions will he be convicted.

Mr Levitt has been openly notified to the British Boxing Board of Control as a consultant, a post that does not breach the ban.

Mr Levitt shut to fame as possibly the best salesman the life-assurance industry had ever seen. His company, The Levitt Group, managed investments for perhaps 30 wealthy people, including film director Michael Winner and writer Frederick Forsyth.

The firm went into administration in 1990, and, three years later, Mr Levitt pleaded guilty to a single charge of fraudulent trading.

On leaving court, Mr Levitt announced his intention of selling vacuum cleaners, although in the event he has actually followed the less prosaic path of his sports consultancy interests.

Mr Levitt's Grade II-listed home in St John's Wood Road, north London, is on the market for £265,000.



Roger Levitt... For his prosecution to succeed, the DTI will have to prove he was a "shadow director" regularly giving instructions to company officers. PHOTOGRAPH: SEAN SMITH

Notebook

Time for a retreat out of equities



Edited by Alex Brummer

THIS is not a good moment for anyone even to be thinking about buying equities. Last week's big falls in Tokyo, London and New York were the warning siren, sounded by Alan Greenspan, decided to keep their powder dry at the December monetary gathering, so there will be no immediate increase in interest rates.

If UK base rates are to rise above 6 per cent, as has been the consensus among analysts that will wait now until well into January. The key is the data for domestic demand: a further tightening might be necessary if that remains strong. But for the moment the new levels for the pound offset the need for further pre-emptive action.

That ought to be fine for UK shares. However, broader factors are now working on the global stock markets. There has been a great deal of post-electoral optimism in the US, keeping shares strong, on the back of prospects for the global economy and Japanese recovery in particular. There is now some concern that the Japanese expansion is starting to drift and that Tokyo investors are less than keen on financing the US trade gap, as it begins to swell on the eroded competitiveness of the US dollar.

One of the factors driving the Dow downwards is the possibility that Abby Joseph Cohen, co-chair of Goldman Sachs' investment policy committee and the current fashionable Manhattan guru, is revising the firm's view on equities. Goldman Sachs' currently recommends a model portfolio of 60 per cent assets in shares, 25 per cent in bonds, 5 per cent in commodities and 10 per cent in cash. In British terms, where so many funds determined to put up the best performances are much more heavily into equities, that appears rather a conservative formulation.

Aside from what the gurus have to say, there are other reasons to be cautious. The war of words over the US budget deficit, slashed during Clinton's first term, are returning with a Democratic White House and Republican Congress battling over how to bring it to balance. Moreover, what cannot be forgotten is that the Federal Reserve does not simply use verbal tricks to warn off the stock market.

The Board has been concerned for some time about an element of frothiness in the market place and broader economy, with some of 1997 lingering in the background. If markets do not heed the central bank's warnings then it can begin the process of adjusting rates upwards.

The election, however, is behind it and, by and large, the US public has shifted too much of its liquidity into mutual funds. As the funds and the public reassess the sense of being so dependent on the stock market, the Dow will continue to fall, with the ripples felt much more broadly.

Thinking global

IN THE fantasy world of Westminister, the world of the euro are paramount. But, beyond the House of Commons, industry is much more concerned about Europe's ability to foster conditions which allow it to compete with the emerging nations of the Far East.

Trade ministers were forcefully reminded of that fact yesterday when 12 leading European industrialists and trade unionists handed them a tough analysis of Europe's record in the region. According to the Competitive-ness Advisory Group, set up by European Commission president Jacques Santer, the US and Japan are integrating more successfully into what is fast becoming a global economy.

At a glance the picture is not too bleak. Europe's share of world exports fell over the past five years from 21.1 per cent to 19.4 per cent. The US share is also down. And Japan only held its share, albeit in the face of the yen's appreciation.

But the paucity of Europe's world ranking is laid bare in South-east Asia. The region with the fastest expanding markets in the world accounted for just 11.9 per cent of EU exports, against 14.4 per cent of US exports and 28.6 per cent of Japanese exports.

The advisory group, which includes BP chairman Sir David Simon, takes a side-sweep at Europe's track record in research and development, but the most striking criticism is aimed at industry itself. European direct investment in South-east Asia is "all but negligible", the group says, yet companies must integrate into the local economies if they are to be successful. That lesson has been learnt by the European competitors.

Germany's share of total foreign direct investment rose from 1.4 per cent to 3.6 per cent in the five years to 1990, while the US doubled its share to 19.3 per cent. By 1994 Japan had 18.8 per cent.

The report looks beyond the parochial debate at Westminster. Half of its authors clearly are convinced that a single currency should happen. Maybe the failure to get a consensus led them to produce the 27-page document without a single reference to EMU. Or maybe they agree that the real issue facing industry is not European but global integration.

Wall Street braces itself for a crash

Paul Murphy reports on turmoil in the world's stock markets

AFRESH bout of jitters swept across the world's financial markets yesterday, reinforcing worries that stock markets in New York and across Europe could be heading for a substantial fall.

While markets in London and New York had appeared to have regained their poise in the wake of Friday's "mini crash", a series of rumours and comments yesterday combined to wipe 73 points off the FT-SE 100 index at one stage — nearly 2 per cent — in anticipation of a big sell-off on Wall Street.

The main British index closed at 3982.5, down 53.2 points, while in New York the Dow Jones Industrial plunged 120 points before a slight rally.

US investors remained nervously cautious as brokers told them to "sober up".

Yesterday's panic was sparked by comments in the Wall Street Journal, suggest-

ing that Japanese financial institutions were set to reduce their holdings of American assets — in particular, US treasury bonds.

This was followed by rumours that a Japanese bank was close to collapse, fuelling concerns that Japanese investors would repatriate cash.

Japanese money has helped fuel the strong US bond market over the past year, which in turn has helped push share prices to record highs.

"This is a big issue going forward," said Robert Hormats, a strategist at investment bankers Goldman Sachs.

"It could be the Achilles heel of the bond and stock markets."

A strong inflation report for November piled on the agony, while a damaging rumour circulated that IBM was about to issue a profits warning.

The computer company was forced to issue a denial.

Nerves were also frayed by reports that Saudi Arabia had forwarded evidence to the Americans suggesting that the bombing of a US barracks in Saudi Arabia in the summer was funded by Iran.

The article in the markets overshadowed the monthly meeting between Kenneth Clarke and the Governor of the Bank of England, Eddie George.

Expectations that interest rates would be left on hold proved correct.

There was no change to the 6 per cent base rate after the 90-minute meeting between the Bank and Treasury teams yesterday afternoon, when the authorities would have seen the latest official data on retail price inflation due to be published today.

Although Mr George said last week in evidence on the state of the economy to the Treasury select committee that he saw no need for a "dramatic" rise he repeated that rate that rates had to rise sooner rather than later to prevent price rises in check.

Mr Clarke has argued that inflationary pressure is weak,

Wickes in new board shake-up ahead of rescue rights issue

SCANDAL-HIT building supplies group Wickes yesterday announced a further shake-out of its board ahead of the long-awaited announcement of a rescue rights issue, expected today.

The latest departure is Sanford Kaplan, a 79-year-old US associate of former chairman Henry Sweetbaum. He resigned with immediate effect yesterday.

Wickes is expected to raise £50 million to repair its balance sheet following the discovery earlier this year of serious accounting irregularities which had overstated its profits for several years.

The rights issue documentation will include details of the profit overstatements, and of new contracts with suppliers. It will also reveal the true state of Wickes' current trading on the basis of the new contracts, which will give an indication of the company's chances of retaining its independence.

The suspension of Wickes' shares is expected to be lifted after the issue, but that could be the signal for a takeover bid from elsewhere in the DIY sector or from a foreign operator looking to enter the UK market.

Mr Sweetbaum resigned in June when the profit mis-statement emerged, while insisting he knew nothing of the irregularities. Two senior executives also resigned after being suspended in June.

The Serious Fraud Office launched an inquiry into the affair last month, following a lengthy investigation by accountants and lawyers into the agreements with suppliers which resulted in Wickes' profits being overstated.

Ronson hits comeback trail with £100m move

Ian King

GERALD Ronson, who was jailed for six months in 1990 for his part in the Guinness affair, yesterday took the first step towards his aim of rebuilding a property empire by announcing a £100 million development and investment.

Heron International, the private company he heads, is to invest in four major city centre projects in London, Madrid and Barcelona. Mr Ronson built Heron into Britain's second biggest property company in the 70s and 80s before its equally spectacular decline.

The developments, which will largely comprise retail and office accommodation, include properties in the Strand and Tottenham Court Road in London and the famous Paseo de Gracia in Barcelona.

Announcing the deal, Mr Ronson said the projects marked a big step forward in Heron's objective of becoming one of Europe's main prop-

erty groups, giving the company prime quality space in three of Europe's leading cities.

He added: "We continue to look for suitable opportunities throughout Europe where we can capitalise on Heron International's significant expertise."

Heron, which includes Steven Green, the owner of Samsonite luggage, Rupert Murdoch and US telecoms billionaire Craig McCaw among its backers, is expected to announce further significant property deals over the next few months.

The company was among the bidders last year when Canary Wharf was auctioned off by its bankers, although it eventually lost out to Canadian Paul Reichmann, the original developer of the project.

But a spokesman for the company said last night that Heron's backers, along with Mr Ronson himself, had ambitious plans.

He added: "Make no mistake, this deal demonstrates

that Mr Ronson is firmly back in the game, and there's more to come. Some of the world's most powerful investors have backed Heron, and the company is capable of many more deals."

From a situation where the Ronson family once controlled Heron, Mr Ronson — who founded the company with his father in 1965 — has seen his stake in the company dwindle to a mere 5 per cent, although he is still thought to receive a substantial salary.

At its peak, Heron had numerous trading interests — including petrol stations, house building and car-dealing — and by the end of the 80s was worth in excess of £1 billion.

However, the company came close to collapse in the 90s after many of its activities were battered by the effects of the recession, and had to be rescued by its bankers in 1994.

ENVA, Mr Green's group, which led the rescue, is expected to bring the company to market within the next two years.

New anti-smoking drugs will aid fight to kick habit

Pauline Springett

SMOKERS struggling to kick the habit could soon have two more weapons in their armoury, if the US government gives the go-ahead today.

Two of the world's biggest drug companies, Glaxo-Wellcome and Pharmacia & Upjohn, are hoping the advisory panel of the US Food and Drug Administration will give approval for their new anti-smoking products.

If nicotine patches, gum, acupuncture, hypnosis, herbal cigarettes and cold turkey fail, then Glaxo-Wellcome is offering a form of the Wellbutrin SR tablet which is already in use in the US as an anti-depressant. The tablet, which will be offered on prescription and will be available in the US only to begin with, works by affecting the central nervous system, thereby reducing addiction and withdrawal symptoms.



One of the 13 million Britons still addicted to the weed

Pharmacia & Upjohn is seeking the advisory panel's approval for its Nicotrol inhaler. This works by allowing would-be quitters to inhale vapourised nicotine that can satisfy their urge for a cigarette, but delivers only one third of the amount in a cigarette.

The world's big drug companies have been waging up to the lucrative possibilities offered by smokers desperate to quit. Smith-Kline Beecham, and Johnson & Johnson McNeil are just two of the companies already in the market, with nicotine patches and gum.

The Nicotrol inhaler recently won approval in Sweden. For over-the-counter sales, and Pharmacia says the product has been selling well in Denmark. The inhaler would be the third Nicotrol product available in the US. Nicotrol spray is already available by prescription, and Nicotrol patches can be bought over the counter.

About 13 million Britons smoke and 300,000 are believed to be trying to quit at any one time. Although the number of smokers has fallen the success rate of would-be quitters is still poor. It is estimated that while 700,000 people got into the spirit of no-smoking day, only 50,000 stopped for good.

Life policies still mis-sold

Richard Miles

TOO many investors are being sold unsuitable life insurance policies, a City watchdog warned yesterday as it published figures showing one in four mortgage endowments sold by some companies are surrendered in the first two years.

For the first time, the Personal Investment Authority disclosed the lapse records of individual insurance companies. The lapse rate — a measure of how soon a policy is cashed in after purchase — is an important indication of whether customers were sold a suitable product.

Surrendering an endowment within the first five years usually brings heavy

penalties. Investors get back less money than they have paid into the policy because of hefty upfront charges. In some instances, insurance companies pay virtually nothing on surrender in the first year or two.

Dropping up the bottom of the PIA's table are the home service companies, which sell their policies through door-to-door salesmen. On average, one in four of their customers surrender a regular-premium endowment within two years and so lose money.

Worst offender is London & Manchester, 40 per cent of whose endowments are cashed by the second year. Only 10 per cent of policies sold by independent financial advisers lapse within the same period.

TOURIST RATES — BANK SELLS

Australia 2,0280	France 17.47	Italy 2,479	Singapore 2,2650
Austria 17.47	Germany 2,4850	Malta 0.56	South Africa 7.54
Belgium 17.14	Greece 396.03	Netherlands 2.78	Spain 206.85
Canada 2,2020	Hong Kong 12.48	New Zealand 2,3150	Sweden 11.06
Cyprus 0.75	India 58.28	Norway 10.71	Switzerland 1.21
Denmark 8.55	Ireland 0.9890	Portugal 262.75	Turkey 106,951
Finland 7.58	Saudi Arabia 6.17	USA 1,0195	

Supplied by NatWest Bank (excluding Indian rupee and Israeli sheqel).

VW and General Motors step up war of words

Lopez indicted for industrial spying

Former star faces five-year stretch

Ian Traynor in Bonn

THE charismatic former Volkswagen executive Jose Ignacio Lopez faces criminal trial in Germany for industrial spying, it emerged yesterday.

The indictment by German prosecutors prompted VW, Europe's biggest car manufacturer, and its arch-rival, General Motors/Opel, to step up their war of words over personal treachery and betrayal of commercial secrets.

The three were members of Mr Lopez's purchasing department, whom he called his co-warriors.

The indictments follow a three-and-a-half year investigation into the GM alleged espionage by Lopez and a team of lieutenants transferred thousands of papers and computer files to the German company when he was lured from GM to Volkswagen in 1993.

The Darmstadt prosecutors are expected to announce the charges formally tomorrow.

But Mr Lopez's lawyers, Jürgen Taschke and Eberhard Wable, said in a statement they would seek to have the charges dismissed as they would not stand up in court.

The announcement piles the pressure on Volkswagen and its embattled chief, Ferdinand Piech, who could eventually face trial in America.

Besides the criminal charges against Mr Lopez,

GM is suing Volkswagen in a civil case in the US under racketeering legislation and the US Justice Department is also investigating whether criminal charges should be brought.

In an interview with the German news magazine Stern, Mr Piech yesterday ruled out apologising to GM over the allegations and also came close to playing the national patriotic card in the bitter dispute between top executives in Wolfsburg, VW's home, and Detroit.

In the event of GM succeeding in the civil suit and winning damages that could run into billions, Mr Piech said Germans could stop buying GM cars, GM's German subsidiary, Opel, runs VW a close second in the German car market.

Mr Piech is under pressure from the VW board to do a deal with GM and could be out of a job in March when his current contract expires, Stern said.

There are also signs that the dispute is becoming heavily politicised, with Guenther Raxdorf, the economics minister, wanting to raise the row at the World Trade Organisation meeting in Singapore.

The leading opposition politician and prime minister of Lower Saxony, Gerhard Schröder, sits on VW's supervisory board.

There is also talk in Bonn that Chancellor Helmut Kohl may raise the dispute with the White House.

Mr Lopez quit as Volkswagen's purchasing and production director two weeks ago amid signs that both parties might reach an out-of-court settlement.

But the violence of the language on both sides yesterday suggested that hopes for a settlement were fading fast.

GM's conditions for a settlement were Mr Lopez's removal, an apology from Mr Piech and the payment of an unspecified sum in damages.



Going their separate ways... Former colleagues Jose Ignacio Lopez (left) and VW chairman Ferdinand Piech

PHOTOGRAPH: JOCKEL FINCK

Warrior whose philosophy has come alive

IAN TRAYNOR looks at the key man in the Western world's motor industries

THE ascetic 55-year-old Basque eschews red meat and alcohol, revolutionises global industries, attracts fierce loyalty and unremitting hostility — and could now end up behind bars.

over it. After years of propagating and refining a business philosophy that hives off production and assembly of vehicles to sub-contractors, halves production costs and reduces the flagship company to a brand name, quality controller and sales outfit, Mr Lopez is seeing his philosophy come to life in the Brazilian plant.

At the VW factory in Resende, sub-contractors and suppliers provide not only the vehicle components but entire "sub-assemblies", and they also put the vehicles together.

Component prices are squeezed, VW's production role is minimised, and the

result, the Lopez clan enthrone, is high-productivity, low-cost, earnings-rich output: the dream of every global manufacturer fulfilled.

He is handsomely rewarded for his efforts. Until his sacking two weeks ago, his remuneration was reckoned at £3.5 million a year.

But it is the key elements of his strategy — delegation of production to sub-contractors, cost-cutting pressure on components suppliers and the bold new plant — that are at the centre of the industrial spying charges.

When Mr Lopez fled to VW from GM in March 93 after a brief period of will-he-won't-he-jump drama, the tens of

thousands of papers he is alleged to have taken with him before shredding are said to have focused on GM's blueprint (Plateau 6) for a revolutionary plant producing a small car in his native Basque country and on GM's components-pricing strategy.

Mr Lopez's lawyers yesterday effectively admitted that some of the papers related to a GM plant plan, but insisted it was a "coarse, preliminary study" containing no trade secrets, was of little use to anyone and was not passed to other VW executives.

It could yet be years before the courts decide whether "the warrior" waged one battle too many.

other question hanging over Airtours is whether it can remain independent. Rumours of a full bid have persisted for some time but when Miami-based Carnival Corporation took a 23.6 per cent stake in the group in April, Airtours effectively became bid-proof as far as anyone else is concerned.

Mr Crossland admits that Carnival and Airtours are happy with the set-up, and that both are enjoying benefits from the tie-up, but is rather more coy on the possibility of a full takeover.

Ignoring the Monopolies probe, which is unlikely to be completed for a year in any case, yesterday's figures from Airtours show that its market rating deserves to be underplanned by more than just bid speculation.

The upbeat prospects for the group will become even more clear when its rival, First Choice, reports next week.

Early bird gathers the profits

OUTLOOK/ Tour operator cuts out cheapies and wins benefits. Ian King reports

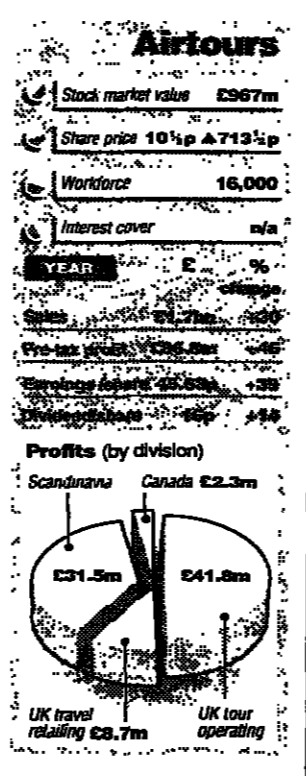
BRITAIN'S holiday industry has taken a fair buffeting over the last 18 months, with vicious competition in 1995 and a monopolies inquiry this year.

However, Airtours — Britain's second biggest tour operator — looks to have negotiated its way through the storms. David Crossland, the group's chairman and chief executive, was able to announce a 46 per cent surge in full-year pre-tax profits yesterday, to £28.8 million, and pledged that more was to come.

The profits boost has come chiefly from the dramatic cuts that Airtours and its rivals made last winter in the number of holidays available, and the price increases pushed through at the same time.

According to Mr Crossland, the days of buying a fortnight's package holiday in Majorca for £25 at the last minute are gone forever, and the message now is "book early to avoid disappointment".

Airtours customers certainly seem to have got the message. In August the group



astonished the industry by publishing its brochures for summer 1997, a full year in advance, and bookings are currently ahead by 57 per cent.

Significantly, the feel-good factor means the pricier holidays have been selling best, giving Airtours better profit margins.

Despite the fall in volumes the group's travel agency business, Going Places, managed to hoist profits by nearly a quarter, helped by the introduction of a foreign currency service to almost every branch.

But it is Scandinavia, where Airtours has expanded rapidly through acquisition over the last five years to grab a 50 per cent market share, that catches the eye. The latest acquisition, Simon Spies — Denmark's equivalent of Thomas Cook, bought by Airtours for £50 million in February — has proved successful and Scandinavia is likely to prove a model for expansion elsewhere.

Mr Crossland makes no secret of the fact that he would like to repeat the trick in Germany, although, with the peculiar network of cross-shareholdings that exist among tour operators in that country, getting an initial foothold could prove awkward.

However, Airtours is not short of financial firepower, and the cash pile of £425 million, can easily splash out up to £250 million on acquisitions, assuming a similar amount is written off in goodwill. Mr Crossland is also interested in buying another cruise operation, perhaps in the Mediterranean or the Caribbean, and in extending the group's operations in Canada and the US.

Apart from what it intends to do with its cash pile, the

Foreign Office targets sad TV addicts in charm offensive

Dan Atkinson

IN A daring rescue mission that will stand in the finest traditions of British endeavour, our country yesterday stood ready, willing and able to assist the 750 million saddest and loneliest people in the world. These are individuals, from Fiji to Florida, who will watch anything on television.

The Foreign Office yesterday launched a series of programmes promoting British industry, featuring 50 companies who "will be receiving television exposure in around 100 countries".

Before humanity's insomnias and social outcasts know what's hit them, they'll wonder how they ever managed without 30 minutes on the BOG Group, GKN and Lasso.

The 13 programmes are even now being loaded into planes for distribution to embassies around the globe. The Foreign Office is hoping for transmission on local TV, and is planning also to invite selected guests for special screenings.

Jeremy Hanley, Foreign Office minister, launched in Good Company with a confident claim that the sight of UK Ltd in action on the small screen would "open up new markets". The trouble is that even a series of non-investigative as in Good Company raises awkward questions.

Beefy industrial outfits are clearly the subjects of choice for the Foreign Office, but we soon run out of Glaxos and British Steels and are reduced to such manufacturing giants as the British Horseracing Board, accountants KPMG and Freshfields, the City solicitors.

After that lot, it's a relief to encounter GEC Alsthom, representing the very best of British power engineering. Pity it's half French.

News in brief

Hoechst move fuels talk

GERMAN chemical company Hoechst yesterday spent £719 million (£2.1 billion) to acquire a 43 per cent minority shareholding in the French pharmaceutical company Roussel Uclaf, in a move which fuelled speculation that it is preparing to split its chemical and pharmaceutical operations along similar lines as ICI and Zeneca.

Hoechst said the buyout will allow it to operate an integrated drugs operation as a separate legal entity, known as Hoechst Marion Roussel after the 1995 acquisition of US group Marion Merrell Dow. Hoechst also paid \$34 million for the organic pigment business of the UK company Cookson. — Roger Coote

French lift for Wales

ALMOST 300 new jobs will be created in a work-starved Welsh town following a French motor component manufacturer's decision to establish a factory to produce car seat frames. The £12 million investment at Tredegar by the Bertrand Faure Group will provide a significant boost to an area ravaged by the run down of the coal and steel industries. Male unemployment in the region stands at 18 per cent.

Future currently supplies seats for Honda and Rover models from a plant in Oxfordshire. New business has meant bringing in additional seat frame capacity.

Meanwhile, Benteler, a German car parts firm, is investing £14 million in a new plant at Corby, Northants, creating 120 jobs. — Geoffrey Gibbs

EU rules stir waters

ENFORCING stricter EU directives on the quality of bathing and drinking water could add £20 to the average annual household water bill, the National Customer Council of industry watchdog Ofwat (NCC) warned yesterday as the European parliament debated proposed revisions to directives. The revisions would cut the amount of lead allowed in drinking water, requiring a £2 billion programme to replace all water companies' lead pipes in England and Wales and a further £5 billion to replace lead pipes in domestic properties.

NCC said changes to the bathing water directive to increase monitoring for the presence of bacteria from human and animal faeces would cost another £4.2 billion. — Celia Weston

When 'the deputy chairman is tied up' can mean just that

Underside

Dan Atkinson

MEDIA colleagues were over-keen in accepting Safeway's line on the absence of deputy-chairman David Webster at last month's interim results presentation. The "domestic reasons" cited were interpreted by in-the-know analysts as meaning that DW was recovering from a savage assault by masked bandits, in which he and his wife had been handcuffed and robbed. Safeway insisted: "[We] don't know where these stories come from." Try Hemel Hempstead CID, which confirmed that such a raid had taken place, adding that the Websters (sorry,



anonymous victims) were shaken but unhurt. ELSEWHERE on the beat, no sign yet of that Bud-get Mole being dragged into a Black Maria. Come

November 26, you recall, Treasury security types hunted high and low for the traitor who had passed the Budget to Cap'n Bob's old bulletin board, the Mirror. In went the T-men and came up with, er... nothing. No problem, because everyone else wanted to play, including MI "gloss job" 5. A fortnight on, and the Great George Street line is that Molehaunting is now a police concern. Wise, given the zero chance of a result.

SIR John Harvey-Jones isn't the only VIP connected with former MTM chemicals chief Richard Lines — awaiting sentence after conviction of fraudulently inflating MTM's worth — to have been a touch embarrassed by the verdict. At least The

Troubleshooter stood by his old ICI buddy as a character witness; no such steadfastness in evidence from the Tory Party, once so cuddly with Lines. Mrs T dropped in on MTM HQ and then party chairman Lord Tebbit gave Lines the CBI Business Enterprise award at the Savoy in 1986. Lines, an enthusiastic Tory, put local MP Richard Holt on the payroll as a non-exec, unsurprising as his firm got such good service from the Government: £2.5 million in grants was promised.

SAY what you like about Denis Thatcher, he don't dissemble. No sir. Estate agents On The House publish a newsletter feature from Michael Desmond, I/c Barratt's sales team in 1983, giving Airtours better profit margins.

their Dulwich Gate property. "We discussed all sorts of things, including having Indians as neighbours... I'd never live next door to an Indian, can't stand the smell of their food," he told me. Don't ever change.

FINALLY, MTM brings us back to the law, and hats off to the North Yorkshire force. The group's plants were on Teesside, but a quirk of geography placed its Hutton Rudby HQ five miles inside Yorkshire; half-tearing time for a constabulary of 13,000 men scattered across Heartbeat country, a force whose eight-strong fraud squad was now grappling with a big City scandal. The Serious Fraud Office praised the force for doing "a marvellous job". Quite right.

Advertisement for Amsterdam flights. It features a large '3' and the text 'Amsterdam flights a day! £35 each way'. It also mentions 'easyJet' and 'Call 0990 29 29 29 anytime'. The ad includes a phone number '0990 29 29 29' and a website 'www.easyjet.com'.

سكرا من الاجل

Bad jumpers to be turfed out

Jockey Club tighten standards after death of Richard Davis. Chris Hawkins reports

RIDDING racing of bad horses and trainers are priorities in a list of recommendations by a Jockey Club committee set up to tighten standards following the death of Richard Davis at Southwell in July.

Horses which demonstrably cannot jump and have fallen in three consecutive races, or failed to complete in four successive outings, would not be allowed to run again until they had been independently assessed and schooled.

If a horse then failed to get round again it could be banned for the remainder of the season.

An analysis of the statistics indicates that during each season an average of 48 horses come into this "dangerous" category.

Malcolm Wallace, director of Jockey Club regulations and a member of the committee, stressed that "most jockeys are prepared to ride anything and it is our duty to try and protect them and ensure all horses are well schooled. But, of course, the element of risk is always there."

Interestingly, Mr Sox, the horse that gave Davis his fatal fall, would have slipped through the net, having managed to stand up and complete the course in one of his four previous runs.

To encourage better jumping by the possibility of schooling races over hurdles was discussed with the recommendation that two trials, one in the north and one in the south, should take place.

As well as horses, trainers will be monitored against a set minimum standard, although this will not be based on a number of winners.

Wallace explained: "The minimum standard has not yet been set, but it will be concerned with the percentage of horses that do badly. In other words, four horses that persistently fall in a string of 100 is a lot different from four in a string of five."

"If a trainer falls below the line he would be asked how he intends to improve and further poor results could mean his licence being withdrawn."

Contrary to popular belief it is not a formality to gain a licence and in the last two years 18 per cent of applicants have been turned down. Of 64 applicants for a permit last year over half were refused.

Jockeys also came under the microscope and, surprisingly, a licence for a conditional rider is currently granted purely on the say so of the trainer.

This may not be so in future and the recommendation is that there should be independent verification of a jockey's ability.

Michael Caulfield, secretary of the Jockeys' Association, is in full agreement and commented: "Riding races over hurdles is a very hazardous sport. It is not essential for training success, as proved by Channon. The former England and Southampton soccer player has had winning totals of over 70 in each of the last three Flat seasons."

But in future, to ensure higher standards along the training ranks, applicants will have to attend a 15-day course dealing with all aspects of the job. And at the end they must pass an oral examination.

"They will already have had two years working as an assistant trainer," said Wallace. "Then the course will cover everything from nutrition to taxation and they will be interviewed to see how much they've taken in."

The committee also recommended more spot checks on trainers' facilities and regular assessment of the size and competence of stable staff.

Roby Balding, a member of the National Trainers' Council, welcomed the move. "Anything that tightens up trainers' responsibilities is good," he said. "The requirements placed on a licence holder are fairly valid."

"I understand what they are saying about bad jumpers, but I've trained good horses who had their off spells. For instance, Salehurst won the Ebury Final and our good days were very good, but I spent a lot of time on the floor."

This is a comprehensive Jockey Club review and the contentious subject of summer jumping was on the agenda. The conclusion is that it is here to stay, but that it should never take place on ground worse than good to firm and that this proviso should be extended to cover meetings in August as well.



All-weather proofed... Runners at Lingfield yesterday are well protected against flying sand from the synthetic surface. PHOTOGRAPH: FRANK BARON

Telf one of 14 poor horses facing the chop under new criteria

THERE are currently 38 National Hunt horses with a rating of 60 or below — jumping's bottom drawer — but only 14 would face the chop under the new Jockey Club criteria, writes Chris Hawkins.

Telf, a 16-year-old, has claims to be Britain's worst. His form figures are frightening — he has been pulled-up, unseated his rider or refused in his last five races — but his trainer, Peter Clarke, still rates him.

"He's won two races and knocks spots off another of ours at home, but on the racecourse he tends to get tired and then jump badly," said Clarke. "It would be a shame if he was banned."

A prospective trainer recently rejected by the Jockey Club is Mick Quinn, the former Portsmouth, Newcastle and Coventry footballer.

"They said I need another six months' experience as an assistant with Mick Channon, who I work for at the moment," said Quinn.

"I've got a yard lined up to sponsor with 20 boxes and I can't apply again."

A horse background is not essential for training success, as proved by Channon. The former England and Southampton soccer player has had winning totals of over 70 in each of the last three Flat seasons.

Maguire can make hurricane start to four-timer

WITH two winners at Leicester yesterday, the all-weather Maguire can make hurricane start to four-timer.

Jack Tanner (2.40) finished fourth to Urubande at the Cheltenham Festival last season and has already notched two falls with this term. He should be able to give weight all round in the Bovis Crown Gap Winter Hurdle.

The forecast fast ground, which has depleted the Sandown fields again today, would be a worry for Jack Tanner. But the winning times at last Saturday's meeting suggests the going was actually on the easy side. This should enable the highly promising Hurricane Lamp (1.00) to set the ball rolling for Maguire in the opening novice event.

At Hexham yesterday, Russ Garrity earned high praise from Mick Hammond and Tim Easterby, the two trainers who provided him with the middle legs of his 298-1 four-timer.

After seeing Garrity get Shining Edge up in the dying strides to beat the short-priced favourite Anabranch, Easterby enthused: "Russ is getting the breaks and is riding brilliantly. He gave Shining Edge a great ride, particularly as he is a horse who needs things to go right for him."

Sandown runners and riders with form guide

1.00 Hurricane Lamp (nb)	3.40 Jack Tanner
1.20 Phoebe's Bay	3.20 Jackhammer
2.10 Shady Stone	3.40 Phyllis/Winn

Colony Stud (Send to Mrs J. Phoenix), 4 Dunstable Millers, Phoenix to include other horses in same stable as above. 201 outgoings.

1.00 NEW FIVE NOVEMBER HURDLE (25) 110yds 11.15-12.00

101 1-11 HURRICANE LAMP (nb) (2) D. Haddock 7-11-12 A. Maguire

102 AWARD R ROWN 5-11-12 D. O'Connell

103 PHOEBE'S BAY (2) (2) J. Jones 5-11-12 D. O'Connell

104 2-10 SHADY STONE (2) (2) J. Jones 5-11-12 D. O'Connell

105 1-11 HURRICANE LAMP (nb) (2) D. Haddock 7-11-12 A. Maguire

106 2-10 SHADY STONE (2) (2) J. Jones 5-11-12 D. O'Connell

107 1-11 HURRICANE LAMP (nb) (2) D. Haddock 7-11-12 A. Maguire

108 2-10 SHADY STONE (2) (2) J. Jones 5-11-12 D. O'Connell

109 1-11 HURRICANE LAMP (nb) (2) D. Haddock 7-11-12 A. Maguire

110 2-10 SHADY STONE (2) (2) J. Jones 5-11-12 D. O'Connell

111 1-11 HURRICANE LAMP (nb) (2) D. Haddock 7-11-12 A. Maguire

112 2-10 SHADY STONE (2) (2) J. Jones 5-11-12 D. O'Connell

113 1-11 HURRICANE LAMP (nb) (2) D. Haddock 7-11-12 A. Maguire

114 2-10 SHADY STONE (2) (2) J. Jones 5-11-12 D. O'Connell

115 1-11 HURRICANE LAMP (nb) (2) D. Haddock 7-11-12 A. Maguire

116 2-10 SHADY STONE (2) (2) J. Jones 5-11-12 D. O'Connell

117 1-11 HURRICANE LAMP (nb) (2) D. Haddock 7-11-12 A. Maguire

118 2-10 SHADY STONE (2) (2) J. Jones 5-11-12 D. O'Connell

119 1-11 HURRICANE LAMP (nb) (2) D. Haddock 7-11-12 A. Maguire

120 2-10 SHADY STONE (2) (2) J. Jones 5-11-12 D. O'Connell

Fakenham

1.20 Phoebe's Bay	2.20 The Lancer
1.40 Lettice's Hope	2.00 Sunnyside
1.50 Speaker Weather	2.00 Lookingforanabour

Colony Stud, 4 Dunstable Millers, Phoenix to include other horses in same stable as above. 201 outgoings.

1.20 NEW CHALLENGER HURDLE (25) 110yds 11.15-12.00

1 1297-4 LUCY TUFTY (2) (2) P. Jones 5-11-12 D. O'Connell

2 1298-2 BRYAN STARBUCK (2) (2) P. Jones 5-11-12 D. O'Connell

3 1299-1 BRYAN STARBUCK (2) (2) P. Jones 5-11-12 D. O'Connell

4 1300-3 ALDERSAY (2) (2) J. Jones 5-11-12 D. O'Connell

5 1301-2 BRYAN STARBUCK (2) (2) P. Jones 5-11-12 D. O'Connell

6 1302-1 BRYAN STARBUCK (2) (2) P. Jones 5-11-12 D. O'Connell

7 1303-4 LUCY TUFTY (2) (2) P. Jones 5-11-12 D. O'Connell

8 1304-2 BRYAN STARBUCK (2) (2) P. Jones 5-11-12 D. O'Connell

9 1305-1 BRYAN STARBUCK (2) (2) P. Jones 5-11-12 D. O'Connell

10 1306-3 ALDERSAY (2) (2) J. Jones 5-11-12 D. O'Connell

11 1307-2 BRYAN STARBUCK (2) (2) P. Jones 5-11-12 D. O'Connell

12 1308-1 BRYAN STARBUCK (2) (2) P. Jones 5-11-12 D. O'Connell

13 1309-4 LUCY TUFTY (2) (2) P. Jones 5-11-12 D. O'Connell

14 1310-2 BRYAN STARBUCK (2) (2) P. Jones 5-11-12 D. O'Connell

15 1311-1 BRYAN STARBUCK (2) (2) P. Jones 5-11-12 D. O'Connell

16 1312-3 ALDERSAY (2) (2) J. Jones 5-11-12 D. O'Connell

17 1313-2 BRYAN STARBUCK (2) (2) P. Jones 5-11-12 D. O'Connell

18 1314-1 BRYAN STARBUCK (2) (2) P. Jones 5-11-12 D. O'Connell

19 1315-4 LUCY TUFTY (2) (2) P. Jones 5-11-12 D. O'Connell

20 1316-2 BRYAN STARBUCK (2) (2) P. Jones 5-11-12 D. O'Connell

Taunton

1.10 Shady Stone	2.50 Call Me Now
1.20 Perfect Bertha	2.50 Out Flanking
2.20 Saxon Mead	2.50 Out Flanking

Colony Stud (Send to Mrs J. Phoenix), 4 Dunstable Millers, Phoenix to include other horses in same stable as above. 201 outgoings.

1.10 WEST HATCH NOVEMBER HURDLE (25) 110yds 11.15-12.00

1 301-2 WEST HATCH (2) (2) P. Jones 5-11-12 D. O'Connell

2 302-1 WEST HATCH (2) (2) P. Jones 5-11-12 D. O'Connell

3 303-3 ALDERSAY (2) (2) J. Jones 5-11-12 D. O'Connell

4 304-2 WEST HATCH (2) (2) P. Jones 5-11-12 D. O'Connell

5 305-1 WEST HATCH (2) (2) P. Jones 5-11-12 D. O'Connell

6 306-3 ALDERSAY (2) (2) J. Jones 5-11-12 D. O'Connell

7 307-2 WEST HATCH (2) (2) P. Jones 5-11-12 D. O'Connell

8 308-1 WEST HATCH (2) (2) P. Jones 5-11-12 D. O'Connell

9 309-3 ALDERSAY (2) (2) J. Jones 5-11-12 D. O'Connell

10 310-2 WEST HATCH (2) (2) P. Jones 5-11-12 D. O'Connell

11 311-1 WEST HATCH (2) (2) P. Jones 5-11-12 D. O'Connell

12 312-3 ALDERSAY (2) (2) J. Jones 5-11-12 D. O'Connell

13 313-2 WEST HATCH (2) (2) P. Jones 5-11-12 D. O'Connell

14 314-1 WEST HATCH (2) (2) P. Jones 5-11-12 D. O'Connell

15 315-3 ALDERSAY (2) (2) J. Jones 5-11-12 D. O'Connell

16 316-2 WEST HATCH (2) (2) P. Jones 5-11-12 D. O'Connell

17 317-1 WEST HATCH (2) (2) P. Jones 5-11-12 D. O'Connell

18 318-3 ALDERSAY (2) (2) J. Jones 5-11-12 D. O'Connell

19 319-2 WEST HATCH (2) (2) P. Jones 5-11-12 D. O'Connell

20 320-1 WEST HATCH (2) (2) P. Jones 5-11-12 D. O'Connell

Results

HEXHAM

1.20 Phoebe's Bay, 1.40 Lettice's Hope, 1.50 Speaker Weather, 2.00 Sunnyside, 2.00 Lookingforanabour.

1.20 NEW CHALLENGER HURDLE (25) 110yds 11.15-12.00

1 1297-4 LUCY TUFTY (2) (2) P. Jones 5-11-12 D. O'Connell

2 1298-2 BRYAN STARBUCK (2) (2) P. Jones 5-11-12 D. O'Connell

3 1299-1 BRYAN STARBUCK (2) (2) P. Jones 5-11-12 D. O'Connell

4 1300-3 ALDERSAY (2) (2) J. Jones 5-11-12 D. O'Connell

5 1301-2 BRYAN STARBUCK (2) (2) P. Jones 5-11-12 D. O'Connell

6 1302-1 BRYAN STARBUCK (2) (2) P. Jones 5-11-12 D. O'Connell

7 1303-4 LUCY TUFTY (2) (2) P. Jones 5-11-12 D. O'Connell

8 1304-2 BRYAN STARBUCK (2) (2) P. Jones 5-11-12 D. O'Connell

9 1305-1 BRYAN STARBUCK (2) (2) P. Jones 5-11-12 D. O'Connell

10 1306-3 ALDERSAY (2) (2) J. Jones 5-11-12 D. O'Connell

11 1307-2 BRYAN STARBUCK (2) (2) P. Jones 5-11-12 D. O'Connell

12 1308-1 BRYAN STARBUCK (2) (2) P. Jones 5-11-12 D. O'Connell

13 1309-4 LUCY TUFTY (2) (2) P. Jones 5-11-12 D. O'Connell

14 1310-2 BRYAN STARBUCK (2) (2) P. Jones 5-11-12 D. O'Connell

15 1311-1 BRYAN STARBUCK (2) (2) P. Jones 5-11-12 D. O'Connell

16 1312-3 ALDERSAY (2) (2) J. Jones 5-11-12 D. O'Connell

17 1313-2 BRYAN STARBUCK (2) (2) P. Jones 5-11-12 D. O'Connell

18 1314-1 BRYAN STARBUCK (2) (2) P. Jones 5-11-12 D. O'Connell

19 1315-4 LUCY TUFTY (2) (2) P. Jones 5-11-12 D. O'Connell

20 1316-2 BRYAN STARBUCK (2) (2) P. Jones 5-11-12 D. O'Connell

Results

LEICESTER

1.00 Hurricane Lamp, 1.20 Phoebe's Bay, 2.10 Shady Stone, 3.40 Jack Tanner, 3.20 Jackhammer, 3.40 Phyllis/Winn.

1.00 NEW FIVE NOVEMBER HURDLE (25) 110yds 11.15-12.00

101 1-11 HURRICANE LAMP (nb) (2) D. Haddock 7-11-12 A. Maguire

102 AWARD R ROWN 5-11-12 D. O'Connell

103 PHOEBE'S BAY (2) (2) J. Jones 5-11-12 D. O'Connell

104 2-10 SHADY STONE (2) (2) J. Jones 5-11-12 D. O'Connell

105 1-11 HURRICANE LAMP (nb) (2) D. Haddock 7-11-12 A. Maguire

106 2-10 SHADY STONE (2) (2) J. Jones 5-11-12 D. O'Connell

107 1-11 HURRICANE LAMP (nb) (2) D. Haddock 7-11-12 A. Maguire

108 2-10 SHADY STONE (2) (2) J. Jones 5-11-12 D. O'Connell

109 1-11 HURRICANE LAMP (nb) (2) D. Haddock 7-11-12 A. Maguire

110 2-10 SHADY STONE (2) (2) J. Jones 5-11-12 D. O'Connell

111 1-11 HURRICANE LAMP (nb) (2) D. Haddock 7-11-12 A. Maguire

112 2-10 SHADY STONE (2) (2) J. Jones 5-11-12 D. O'Connell

113 1-11 HURRICANE LAMP (nb) (2) D. Haddock 7-11-12 A. Maguire

114 2-10 SHADY STONE (2) (2) J. Jones 5-11-12 D. O'Connell

115 1-11 HURRICANE LAMP (nb) (2) D. Haddock 7-11-12 A. Maguire

116 2-10 SHADY STONE (2) (2) J. Jones 5-11-12 D. O'Connell

117 1-11 HURRICANE LAMP (nb) (2) D. Haddock 7-11-12 A. Maguire

118 2-10 SHADY STONE (2) (2) J. Jones 5-11-12 D. O'Connell

119 1-11 HURRICANE LAMP (nb) (2) D. Haddock 7-11-12 A. Maguire

120 2-10 SHADY STONE (2) (2) J. Jones 5-11-12 D. O'Connell

Results

FAKENHAM

1.20 Phoebe's Bay, 1.40 Lettice's Hope, 1.50 Speaker Weather, 2.00 Sunnyside, 2.00 Lookingforanabour.

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20 1316-2 BRYAN STARBUCK (2) (2) P. Jones 5-11-12 D. O'Connell

Results

TAUNTON

1.10 Shady Stone, 1.20 Perfect Bertha, 2.20 Saxon Mead, 2.50 Call Me Now, 2.50 Out Flanking.

1.10 WEST HATCH NOVEMBER HURDLE (25) 110yds 11.15-12.00

1 301-2 WEST HATCH (2) (2) P. Jones 5-11-12 D. O'Connell

2 302-1 WEST HATCH (2) (2) P. Jones 5-11-12 D. O'Connell

3 303-3 ALDERSAY (2) (2) J. Jones 5-11-12 D. O'Connell

4 304-2 WEST HATCH (2) (2) P. Jones 5-11-12 D. O'Connell

5 305-1 WEST HATCH (2) (2) P. Jones 5-11-12 D. O'Connell

6 306-3 ALDERSAY (2) (2) J. Jones 5-11-12 D. O'Connell

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8 308-1 WEST HATCH (2) (2) P. Jones 5-11-12 D. O'Connell

9 309-3 ALDERSAY (2) (2) J. Jones 5-11-12 D. O'Connell

10 310-2 WEST HATCH (2) (2) P. Jones 5-11-12 D. O'Connell

11 311-1 WEST HATCH (2) (2) P. Jones 5-11-12 D. O'Connell

12 312-3 ALDERSAY (2) (2) J. Jones 5-11-12 D. O'Connell

13 313-2 WEST HATCH (2) (2) P. Jones 5-11-12 D. O'Connell

14 314-1 WEST HATCH (2) (2) P. Jones 5-11-12 D. O'Connell

15 315-3 ALDERSAY (2) (2) J. Jones 5-11-12 D. O'Connell

16 316-2 WEST HATCH (2) (2) P. Jones 5-11-12 D. O'Connell

17 317-1 WEST HATCH (2) (2) P. Jones 5-11-12 D. O'Connell

18 318-3 ALDERSAY (2) (2) J. Jones 5-11-12 D. O'Connell

19 319-2 WEST HATCH (2) (2) P. Jones 5-11-12 D. O'Connell

20 320-1 WEST HATCH (2) (2) P. Jones 5-11-12 D. O'Connell

RACELINE

0930 168+

SANDOWN FAKENHAM TAUNTON

101 201

102 202

103 203

LEICESTER

1.00 Hurricane Lamp, 1.20 Phoebe's Bay, 2.10 Shady Stone, 3.40 Jack Tanner, 3.20 Jackhammer, 3.40 Phyllis/Winn.

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TAUNTON

1.10 Shady Stone, 1.20 Perfect Bertha, 2.20 Saxon Mead, 2.50 Call Me Now, 2.50 Out Flanking.

Cricket

Tour match: Matabeleland v England XI

Gough red-hot and over the rainbow

David Hoppe in Bulawayo

AS DARREN GOUGH, all red-faced and boisterous, completed the five-wicket performance that might yet herald the rejuvenation of his England career, a rainbow struggled to appear behind him. It was not the most awesome of its kind, and it survived for only a couple of overs, but it was a suitable metaphor for a fast bowler whose career has lurched between crock and crock of gold.

Gough's rainbow consists entirely of red. Do not ever

Table with cricket statistics for England XI and Matabeleland, including names like N V Knight, G J Whittall, and scores.



Making his point... Darren Gough appeals unsuccessfully for lbw against the Matabeleland batsman Mark Dekker

PHOTOGRAPH: CLIVE MASON

expect the blues and yellows of considered analysis. Here is a glorious fast-bowling redneck, entirely consumed by a red-blooded approach which can lift hearts one day and frustrate minds the next.

still requiring three more runs to avoid the follow-on. England's desire for further batting practice will preclude any possibility of its being enforced.

Scarborough in August. Vaghmaria wisely batted in shirt-sleeves yesterday and trusted to memory loss, but to no avail. Gough's first ball, eloquently short, caused him to retreat to square leg, the next demolished his stumps.

He was on a hat-trick in his first spell, the first wicket coming fortunately as Guy Whittall hacked a long hop to cover, his second more impressively so as Ranchood was unbygone by a shortish, hostile delivery.

On the boundary, he curses that the ball does not swing, or swings too much, or swings the wrong way. He responds to every false shot with a look of incredulity. He is up for the challenge.

the blockhole, bowling Andy Whittall in his third spell just before the close. He finished the English season strongly last summer, collecting 67 first-class wickets at 22 each, and his cutting edge is desperately needed.

Symonds snubs Gloucester

unless he returns to Bristol as an overseas player. "I am an Aussie and always have been," he said yesterday. "It is a financial thing but money to me is not everything. It wasn't very tough for me because I have it in my heart that I have always been an Aussie. I love living in Australia. I love the lifestyle and I think I always will."

son's leading run-scorer, who scored a century for Queensland against England in his debut first-class season and hit a record 16 sixes in his 254 not out against Glamorgan in 1995.

The England A coach Mike Gatting said: "I'm glad he's made a decision at last. He's held his hands up and said he wants to play for Australia, which is the best way to do it rather than keeping everybody guessing."



Symonds... official Aussie

Tour match: Queensland v England A

Headley injury hampers England

MIKE GATTING has been straining at the leash to get on to the field for England A throughout his first tour as a coach. But he would not have chosen the circumstances under which he went on as a substitute fielder after tea because of injuries to Dean Headley and Mark Ealham.

three wickets to end with six for 70 on his first-class debut. Headley's nine-over opening burst lacked the zip, movement and inspiration of Adelaide; he surprised the left-hander Troy Dixon with extra bounce and Warren Flegg took a spectacular leg-side catch but England's appeal was turned down and almost immediately Headley left the field.

Ski Hotline

The Latest snow and weather reports from almost 200 resorts in Europe and North America. By phone or fax call: 0891 002 006

Table with ski resort information including names like Alpe d'Huez, Avoriaz, Chamrousse, Courmayeur, and various statistics.

SKI SNAPSHOT AT-A-GLANCE GUIDE TO SNOW CONDITIONS AT ALMOST 200 RESORTS WORLDWIDE. DAILY TABLE BY FAX. CALL: 0897 500 6560

Rugby League

Swelling of Rhino ranks as three Eagles land at Leeds

THE strengthening of Leeds Rhinos continues apace with the signing of three players from Sheffield Eagles. Moving the shortish journey up the M1 yesterday were the 21-year-old Ryan Abernethy and the 19-year-old Dean Lawford, who can both play scrum-half or stand-off.

Test centre Richie Blackmore and the former Hull winger Paul Sterling. Doyle began his professional career with Wymnum Manly in Brisbane and went on to play for the Sydney clubs St George and Eastern Suburbs. Initially a stand-off, he switched to the back row.

England A needed Headley fit and firing to exploit the helpful Gabba conditions even after Ealham, Ashley Giles and Chapple had extended their overnight 170 for seven to 230. Chapple pulled Brendan Creevey for six over midwicket but the 26-year-old bowler took two of the last

Azharuddin's ton inspires India

AN UNBEATEN 163 by their former captain Mohammad Azharuddin helped India to the verge of a first victory in a series against South Africa in the deciding Test in Kanpur. The South Africans, set an improbable target of 461 to win, had slumped to 127

for five by the close on the fourth day. The three-match series is level at 1-1. Azharuddin, sacked as captain this year and nearly dropped altogether, struck 25 fours and a six in a stay lasting 288 balls, which follows his 74-ball century in the second Test in Calcutta.

Last posting day for Xmas



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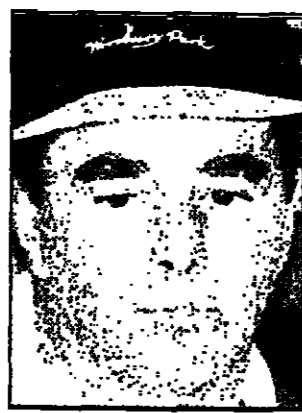
Danger horses hoofed out, page 13

Newcastle set new French test, page 14

True Gritt moves to Brighton, page 14

Gough blows away the doubts, page 15

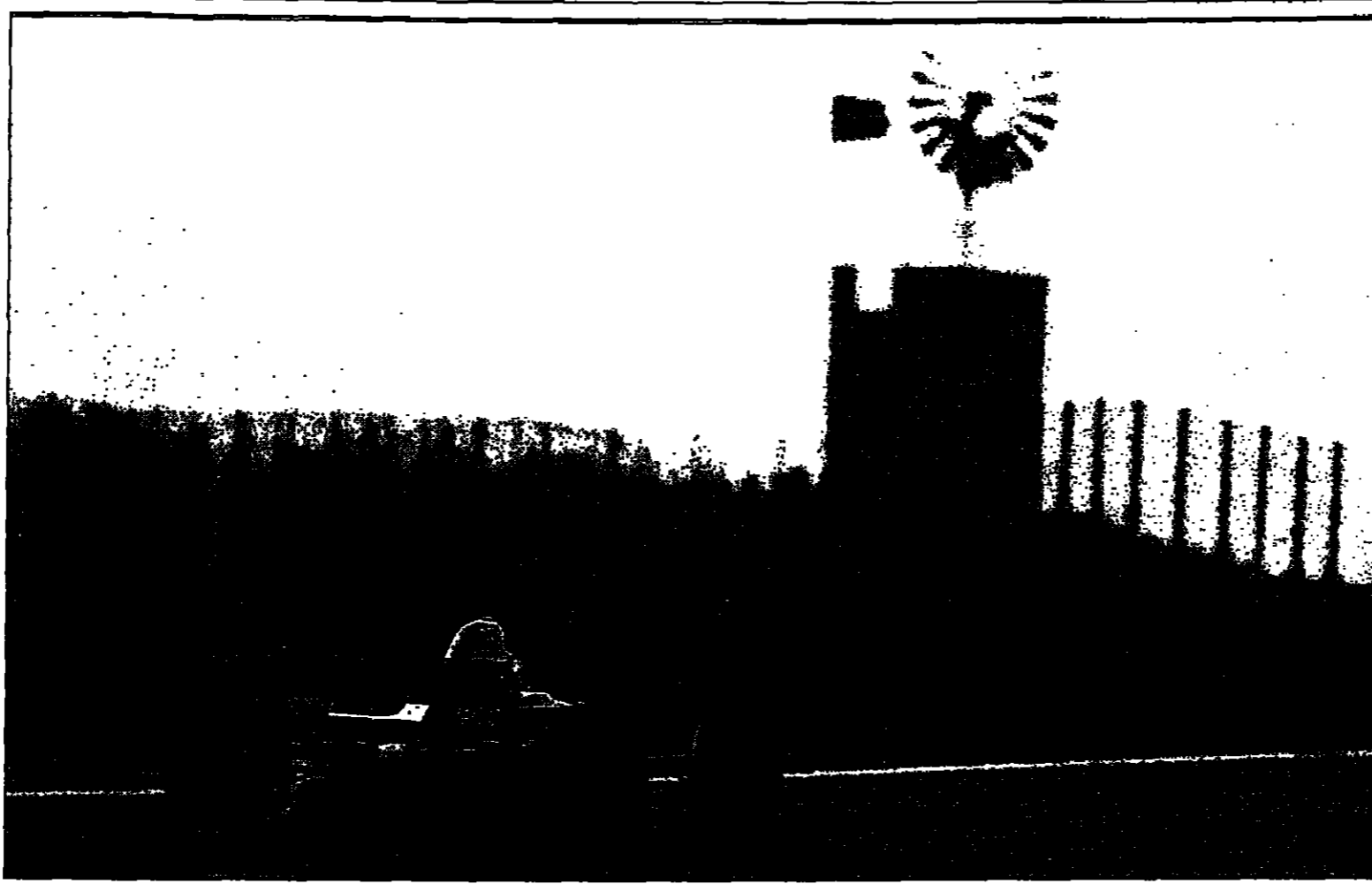
SportsGuardian



Mansell... a brisk 49 laps

The former world champion returns to the cockpit after 18 months of driving only on the golf course

Frank Keating reports from Barcelona



Burning rubber again... Mansell was within 0.3sec of Jordan-Peugeot's nominated driver Ralf Schumacher

PHOTOGRAPH: MIKE COOPER

Old dog Mansell back on track

THE old dog thinks he can still do the trick — and top lick too. Nigel Mansell, at 43, climbed into a Formula One racing car near Barcelona yesterday and put in 49 increasingly impressive laps at a snarling din which obviously meant business. It is 18 months since the former world champion has driven at remotely such speed. If the money is right and the car competitive he may well put his life on the line again next year.

Both Mansell and the team owner Eddie Jordan admitted yesterday that there was a great deal of talking still to be done — not least by their respective bank managers. Yesterday Mansell's fastest lap was 1min 22.88sec compared with young Schumacher's 1:22.59 — some going for the ancient Brit, for he was starting from cold, having played no more than golf all year or had a turn on his kids' Scalextric. Schumacher has already clocked up almost

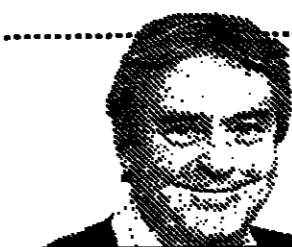
2,000 miles in testing his car. Mansell, as he ever engagingly was, climbed out full of his own conceit. "Ralf's very quick and committed, and he holds serious blocking cards. His agent and brother are apparently unhappy at the possibility of the prodigy being upstaged, and that may ing up process by both parties. For sure, the Jordan team need some headlines and publicity-pulling power; certainly their sponsors do. And if nothing else, Mansell down the long years has written his own headlines. He is a star all right, but stars cost money and a multi-millionaire will be asking for more multi-millions. Would the comparatively low-budget Jordan team break the bank to sign him up? "Only in a realistic way," said Jordan. "Nigel's degree of reality and mine in that respect are probably two different things. There is still a huge amount of talking to be done and it will be weeks before any firm announcement either way."

Mansell concurred: "For me, today was eight out of 10. The engine goes very well. With or without me, Jordan have a real future. "I have to form a relationship with a car, to trust it implicitly before I can push it deep into corners. It takes time, certainly after nearly two years. You have to get used to braking from 200 to 60 in less than two seconds when all you have been doing is getting your golf handicap down from five to one in 12 months." Was fame the spur? "Not so much that. The sport just remains in my blood. It was a day full of portent but also of memories. This

was the track on which only last year Mansell had made his dramatic departure from the McLaren team, running too far down the field for a former champion. He retired to Devon and his golf. End of story? Those in the know knew better — and yesterday the whiff of the pit-lane fumes had brought him back. Mumm, like a Bisto kid... Same old Nigel, except that he's shaved off his "Your-country-needs-me" moustache. By the time he had clamped himself into the cockpit and buckled on his old Union Jack helmet, a sparkling Spanish morning had turned into a pewtery-grey English-like afternoon. Now the sombre quiet was blizzed by the screech of Mansell's engine. The car's livery is the dull old-gold of Benson & Hedges, Jordan's main sponsor. There is talk that B & H will fund Mansell's salary on its own. Or even the F1 ringmaster Bernie Ecclestone. A Brit at the front is a best-seller for the series. Mansell recalled his last-time debacle here. "I didn't retire. I just stood down. Since when I've enjoyed it in no man's land, working on my golf and reflecting on life. If you've never lost the urge to drive fast, what have I to regret? If I'd lost it I would have ended up today in a wall on the very first lap. I didn't, so I've still got it."

At Cardiff this Sunday the full-back in the Springboks' myrtle-green shirt will be Andre Joubert. He is a different sort of counter-attacker, of less boyish gusto but such stealth and subtlety that he probably remains the best of this trio of No. 15s from the southern hemisphere. England's latest choice for this style-defining position, however, is Nick Beal, a utility club player and occasional full-back, while Wales have chosen Neil Jenkins, a veteran who has played all his club and international rugby at fly-half or centre. It is potty; there is something gravely wrong here. It was bad luck that England's Tim Stimpson was concussed after 20 minutes' play on Saturday. Burke was just up and running and his master-class in full-back play would have been an invaluable eye-opener for the Newcastle tyro. The following day an esteemed Sunday-paper writer selected a Northern Hemisphere XV to play the South; that Stimpson, on the strength of one Test cap, was chosen as full-back says it all. Where have Europe's full-backs gone? Alpha and Omega, defences into attack in a spontaneous and intrepid matter of strides. It was noticeable in Cardiff a fortnight ago that whereas Burke was gloriously ramming with the wind in his hair, Wales's full-back Proctor accepted only

Where are all the charging full-backs?



Frank Keating

CHRISTIAN CULLEN charmed the birds from the Twickenham rafters with his irresistible counter-attacking for the New Zealand Barbarians a fortnight ago. The England team could only gawp at the young full-back. The same weekend at Cardiff the Australian No. 15 Matt Burke took a discerning Welsh throng's breath away with his angled steam-hammer runs out of defence, a feat he repeated against the bewildered Barbarians in London the following Saturday. Both these digger-sharp athletes are brim-full of the daring and bonny bravado of youth. Their teams are constructed around them. Indeed, today's all-court rugby puts the full-back first on the team sheet in every sense.

two clear chances to run back the ball and wasted them both, plunging straight at the wall of ochre jerseys and being scruggled without mercy. England stutteringly won the championship last season with Mike Catt, a club fly-half at full-back. In the first five minutes of the opening match in Paris he made two brave incursions, then retired to the last line of defence to be seen in attack no more.

The fly-half at full-back is neither fish nor fowl. This is a position for a voluptuary, and England will continue to labour until they find one. France have never remotely been the great team they were since Serge Blanco, a true maestro *distrait*, went away. Scotland still mourn the loss of Gavin Hastings's gallumph and nerve. Before him, Andy Irvine remains memory's treasure, and so in the red shirt does the nonpareil JPR Williams — the incomparable Japes, socks down, hair flying, all boldness and brass neck.

Mind you, though JPR was the founder of the modern feast, his flair was nothing new under rugby's wintry sun. It was there simply because it had not been coached out of him. Nor was Arthur Marsberg's; that great counter-attacking full-back was introduced to north by south fully 90 years ago, and when we witness another Joubert tutorial at Cardiff on Sunday it will be an exact anniversary of the 1906 Springboks' first match against Wales. It was at St Helen's, with Marsberg at full-back, and South Africa won 11-0.

"It was matchless," O.L. Owen wrote in the Times. "Time and again Marsberg would hurl himself at the ball in the manner of an Association goalkeeper. To see him dive into a forward rush or crash-tackle a single runner seemed indeed a thrill and a fearful joy, and each time his counter-attack was truly thunderous."

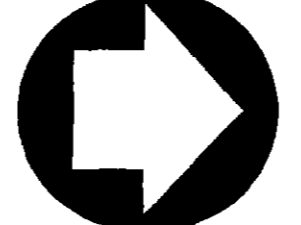
IN THE South Wales Argus the legendary Dromio was also shaken and stirred. "Never was there a man in this position who played the 'kick or nothing' game with such considerate fairness," he wrote. "Marsberg went forward, ever forward, when any other man would have waited to dash in and counter-attack. His picking-up was amazing, and it was cheerful courage too, a genuine originality." Marsberg became head of security at the De Beers mining company in Kimberley. He was an expert trainer of the ferocious Rhodesian ridge-back and albatross guard dogs, two other foreign breeds aware that counter-attack is the vital play.

A milder taste of happiness



SMOKING CAUSES HEART DISEASE
Chief Medical Officers' Warning

Guardian Crossword No 20,834



Aids has been a terrible gift. It has taught many ordinary people — people, in many cases, who had always been forced to think of themselves as cowardly, frivolous and weak — how to be brave. It has given artists and writers a tremendous strength. But it has done so at the cost of killing.
Philip Hensher

Books
G2 page 9

Set by Orlando

1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30

Across
7 Half-hearted evangelist's conflict with Muslim leader (8)
9 Thought one goes in off (6)
10 To play legato is a discredit to one's reputation (4)
11 Brown and green is wrong for fruit (10)
12 Poet caught by power failure? (6)
14 Combine solid exterior with smooth interior (8)
15 Polish language, audible (6)
17 Georgia carrying torch for composer (6)
20 An old soldier is not so good without a right hand (6)
22 Flock and roll at labs (6)
23 Driver taking poor teacher round city (10)
24 Appear in entertainment (4)
25 Lament about girl's rent (6)

Down
26 Ready to be won over? So let it be over island (8)
1 Hector removed at start of game (5-3)
2 Drink to be set before the queen (4)
3 Loudly change flag (6)
4 Diabolical Lenin? Far from it (8)
5 Multiplication in Sunday school for youngsters (10)
6 Concealed lid on top of tin (6)
8 Is able to rise in low principality (6)
13 Groggy when beverage gets imbibed (5-5)
16 Stone or sand shaped with axes (8)
18 No body in college? (3,5)
19 Dope has time for classes (8)

Solution tomorrow
21 Swimmer initially approaches Hero waving on land (6)
22 Quarrel excluding French marshal (6)
24 Fish with a portion of chips — haddock, perhaps (4)

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22 Quarrel excluding French marshal (6)
24 Fish with a portion of chips — haddock, perhaps (4)

صوتنا من الاجل